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1854

A RIDE ACROSS THE CHANNEL,

AND OTHER

ADVENTURES IN THE AIR.

BY

COL. FRED BURNABY,

Member of the Council of the Aeronautical Society.

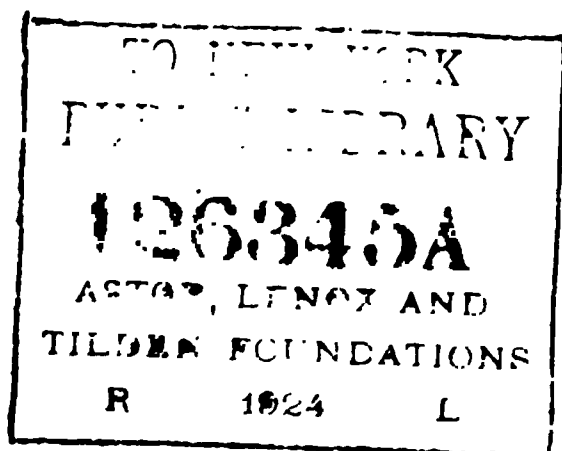
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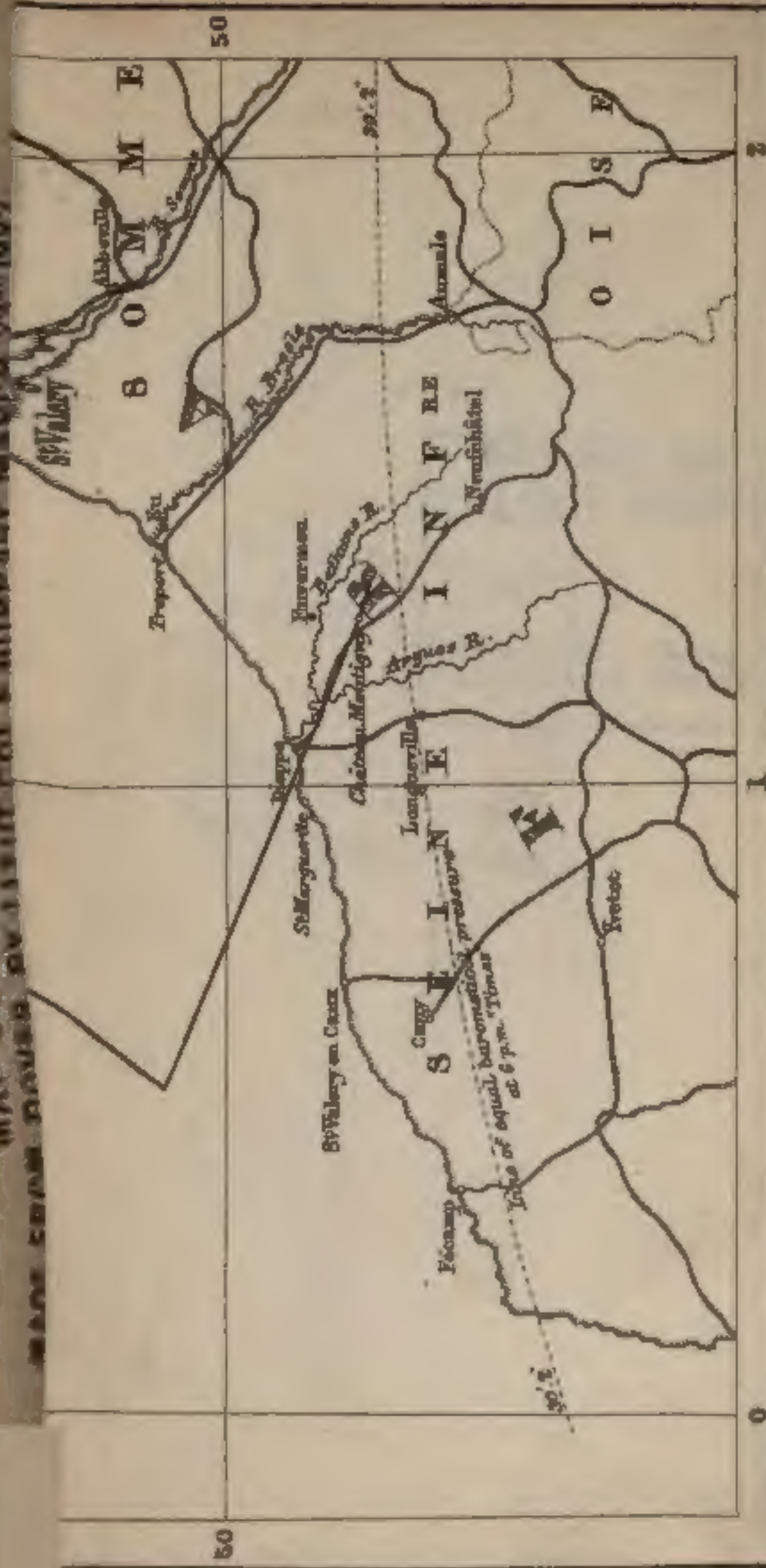
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MAP SHOWING ORIGIN OF THE
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A RIDE ACROSS THE CHANNEL,

AND OTHER

ADVENTURES IN THE AIR.



CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION FOR THE START.

IT was the morning of the 4th of March, 1882. The wind was blowing hard in our faces on the deck of the Calais and Dover steamer. Two fellow-travellers, whose acquaintance I had made in the train, were talking to one of the sailors. I overheard the conversation. It was as follows:—

“So they really started this morning.”

“Yes,” replied the man, “I seed them

high up over the sea near Dover as we left that port. They must have arrived in France before now."

By this I gathered that the discussion was about the balloon excursion of Colonel Brine and Mr. Simmonds. A few weeks previous, when in Tunis, I read in a French paper that these two gentlemen contemplated crossing the Channel. Approaching the sailor I inquired when he thought the balloon would have reached the French coast.

"About dusk," was the answer; "least-ways if the wind did not chop round when they were in the air."

"A man must be a great fool who goes up in a balloon," said one of my fellow-travellers.

"An infernal fool," added the tar; the third gentleman nodded assent.

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

“What is the good of it,” was the reply. “A man has no right to risk his neck—unless there is some object to be gained.”

“Then you think a man a fool who hunts and rides steeplechases?”

“No, I don’t; because he may obtain health and a pleasant sort of excitement in these pursuits.”

“Have you ever been up in a balloon?” I inquired.

“No.”

“Then how can you tell that a man may not have a pleasant sort of excitement when in the air; besides that, if people were always content with locomotion by land and water, there would be no inducement to engineers to endeavour to solve the great problem as to how we shall some day navigate the air, and balloons are of great use in time of war.”

"Do you mean that we shall even travel in the atmosphere, and be able to guide balloons?"

"Perhaps not to guide balloons, because they are lighter than the air; but when we have a power stronger than steam, and which does not require such heavy machinery to generate, then we shall be able to utilize it, and rise from the ground. Once we can ascend from the earth we shall be able to go where we wish. A bird flies: it is heavier than the air, but can strike a blow with its wings that is much in excess of its own weight."

"Well that may be all very larned, and read well in books," said the tar; "but it will be a long time, I take it, afore they cuts out our packets either with balloons or with old Watkin's blessed tunnel, which is to take all the bread, they say, out of the mouths of us

poor sailors ;” and the man turned on his heel with a grunt of dissatisfaction.

On reaching Dover I heard of the accident that had happened to the two aeronauts. Indeed, a little later in the day I had the opportunity of having a few minutes’ hurried conversation with Mr. Simmonds. He informed me that his failure was owing to the wind, which suddenly changed to the south-west, and began to blow him towards the German Ocean. Now, I hold the theory that at different altitudes a breeze will frequently be found blowing in a different direction to the current of air to be met with near the earth. It occurred to me that if the two aeronauts had been provided with sufficient ballast to have enabled them to ascend to a high altitude they might have met with a favourable breeze. It was with this idea that I returned to town.

Before I retired to rest I wrote to Mr. Wright, the well-known aeronaut, an old fellow-townsmen of my own, asking if he would let me hire from him a balloon, so that I might attempt the voyage. Was there anything else which induced me to try and accomplish the journey? Yes, I will frankly confess to the reader. Colonel Brine was an engineer; and where reconnaissances are in question I thought that the cavalry ought to make them.

Mr. Wright wrote by return of post. He had a balloon. Mr. Powell had once made an ascent in it. The balloon was nearly new. It would hold 36,000 feet of gas, and be the very thing for the journey. Mr. Wright in a postscript said that he much wished to make the attempt himself, and would be very glad if he might accompany me.

Now a balloon containing 36,000 feet

of gas; although when inflated it stands about seventy feet from the ground, cannot carry two men for many hours, and particularly when one of the passengers weighs seventeen stone, hence I replied that I should be delighted to make an ascent with Mr. Wright for any inland excursion, but for the voyage across the Channel I should require every available pound of ballast, and must go alone. At an interview I had with this gentleman a few days afterwards, arrangements were made as to terms, &c. It was agreed that on Saturday, the 18th of March, he should take the balloon to Folkestone and see whether at the gas-works in that town it could be inflated; failing this he was to continue his journey and see the gas manager at Dover.

The following Monday I received a telegram. It was to the effect that in

neither town would it be easy to inflate the balloon, and that Mr. Wright would meet me at Folkestone. I arrived there the same afternoon, and walked with the aeronaut to the gas-works. The building was too enclosed, and it would have been very difficult to fill the balloon there. My companion then suggested that Ashford might be a suitable place. Mr. Coxwell, the veteran aeronaut, had made one of his famous ascents from that town. He added, that although the Dover gas-works were not convenient, owing to a high chimney and to the exposed situation of the ground, still in his opinion they would be more suitable for the business than Folkestone.

The same afternoon we started for Dover; that evening I visited the manager of the Buckland gas-works. He informed me that he could supply gas at the rate of 3s. 6d. per thousand

feet, and could put down a four-inch pipe through which to fill the balloon. He also declared that he could inflate the globe in an hour and a half.

“In an hour and a half, and through a four-inch pipe,” replied Wright. “I will eat my hat if you can do it in four hours.”

I wanted the manager to complete the work of laying down the pipes that evening, so as to lose no time, and be able to start the following morning if the wind was favourable. However, he declared that it would be impossible to finish operations before ten the next day. At that hour it would have been too late to commence filling the balloon; I determined, much to my regret, to postpone the journey for twenty-four hours, and then start, that is, if the weather-cocks pointed in a suitable direction.

“Just like our luck,” said Wright, the

following morning. "Here is the blessed wind blowing straight for Calais, and lovely weather too. Why, sir, you could be across with this wind in less than an hour."

It was the case. The current of air was most favourable. Would it continue so? It was with serious doubt on the subject that I returned to my hotel. There I found numerous telegrams from utter strangers, offering to accompany me. The manager of a celebrated London newspaper wired that he had a correspondent eager to go. Another young gentleman wrote that he only weighed eight stone four pounds, and he would take up but little room in the car. Should all his expenses be paid for him he would be delighted to be my companion. With every desire to satisfy the manager of the London daily paper, who, by the way, looks upon

aeronauts in general as lunatics or balloonatics, the weight of his correspondent would have diminished my ballast by probably ten stone, hence I replied that to my regret I could not comply with his request. To the gentleman of eight stone four pounds the pressure of business did not permit me to give an answer.

All the arrangements had been made for an early start. Mr. Wright, for the forty-fourth time, had hinted he should like to accompany me, and for the forty-fourth time I had changed the conversation. His was a new aerostat, and Mr. Wright, like all other true aeronauts, looks upon a balloon with as much affection as a thoroughbred tar bears towards his vessel.

"You will be careful, sir, in packing her up if you come down all right, and should she burst you will remember to let

go this cord, not that she be likely to burst, but these things will occur sometimes, as you know, sir, and we must look after the tools of our trade, though of course I should be very sorry if anything should happen to you; and at the same time I should like a little piece of paper, just to say you 'are' responsible for the balloon, something to show, in case you should not return. To save time to-morrow, sir," he added, "I have laid out the silk on the ground this afternoon, have procured some tarpaulins and placed them under and over the netting. It will save you at least two hours in the morning having all these things done over night."

I had not thought of this myself, and felt indeed fortunate that I had such an experienced aeronaut to inflate the balloon for me. Before we parted that evening he had agreed to be at the gas-works at

5.30 a.m. the next day, and I was to meet him at that hour. The same night I walked with a friend to the pier, and inquired of a coastguardsman what way he thought the wind would blow on the morrow.

"It is blowing hard from the North Sea now," was the reply.

"Where would a balloon reach France if it started from here now?" inquired my companion.

"Half way between Calais and Boulogne; but there be no fool big enough to go up in one, I take it."

"Of course not," said my friend.

It was about 10 p.m. when I retired to rest, having left orders for my servant to call me at 4.30 the following morning. How the wind howled that night, the panes of glass in my room rattled in their sockets. With such a gale it would have been impossible to have filled the

aerostat. It was with the idea that I should go to the gas-works the following morning on a fruitless errand that I closed my eyes and began my slumber.

“The wind is in the right direction, sir.”

These words from my servant's lips awoke me. He continued,—

“I have been on the pier. All the coastguardsmen say the wind is from the north, and it has calmed down considerably since the night. The cocks, too, are all pointing in the right direction.”

He had cut me some beef sandwiches, and obtained some mineral water, and with these provisions strapped up in a rug, and with a thermometer, barometer, and compass in my pocket, I proceeded with him to the gas-works. These buildings are about a mile in rear of the famous old castle. There on the battlements stood out boldly the tall flagstaff, with its pennon pointing almost straight to

Boulogne—an admirable guide as to the direction of the wind, for higher than all the surrounding country it was unaffected by draughts, and afforded an unfailing proof as to which way the breeze was blowing.

The men had not assembled for their work when I arrived on the scene of operations. The balloon lay stretched out on a plot of ground not far from two of the largest gasometers. The tarpaulins that covered her were encased in a film of ice. It had rained at the time the balloon was unpacked. The hard frost during the night had congealed some of the water.

Wright now appeared, accompanied by the manager of the company. The aeronaut withdrew the tarpaulins, and then, taking off his boots, walked with stockinged feet over the balloon to see whether it had undergone any damage

during the night. But no, in a few places only the water had penetrated the waterproofs, and a crust of thin ice had been formed on the silk and cording.

“No harm done,” called out the aeronaut. “And now, sir, as to orders. Shall I begin filling?”

It was the consideration of a moment. The Castle pennon pointed straight to Boulogne. “Yes, and at once,” I replied.

Everything having been prepared and ready, in a few minutes he attached a long canvas pipe to the one that had been laid down by the gas people, and connected it with the neck of the balloon.

“Turn on!” shouted the director.

A man by the gasometer moved a handle. In a few seconds the canvas pipe began to swell, bulge, and assume the dimensions of a gigantic conger-eel, and the folds of the balloon to

shake and tremble. By degrees they rose from the ground; as they did so, sixty or seventy large bags filled with earth were attached to the netting around the aerostat. Gradually the gas lifted these heavy sacks. In turn they were suspended to other meshes, still lower down the cordage. The rays of the morning sun rising in the east shone on the red and yellow strips of well-varnished silk and calico of which the balloon is formed. They reflected back the light as the globe rose little by little in the air—now swaying to and fro as impelled by the wind it endeavoured to break from the bags that fettered it to the ground, now absolutely stationary as the gust passed away—but each moment becoming higher and higher, as the gas poured in through the piping.

“We shall not have her filled before ten,” said Wright, suddenly turning from

his occupation of hooking and unhooking the bags of sand. "I wish you would see the manager, sir, and ask him to give us more pressure. She ought to be three-parts full by this time, and half of her is still empty."

After a few minutes' conversation with the gentleman alluded to, he ordered a second gasometer to be placed in connexion with the one from which the balloon was being filled; this gave at once a pressure of sixty-four tons. In a few minutes the sound of an increased volume of gas rushing into the silk showed that Wright had obtained what he desired. Now the balloon assumed the well-known pear shape; taller and taller she became, bidding fair to rival the factory shaft which, eighty feet in height, dwarfed the chimney tops in its vicinity. Finally, when all but full, and endeavouring to burst the bonds that

held it to the ground, the car, a basket of about five feet long, three feet broad, and the same high, was attached to the netting. Twenty strong and willing arms held fast the sides of the balloon. The bags of sand which surrounded the aerostat were unhooked and placed in the car; and looking at my watch, I inquired of the aeronaut if everything was not now ready for a start.

“Not quite, just one more puff of gas; not but what by the time you are 2000 feet high all that gas will have disappeared.”

Wright evidently had an eye to the appearance of his balloon; he wished her to go up in as symmetrical a form as possible. Resigning myself to my fate, I waited another five minutes. It was then about ten o'clock. If the start had been made, as I had hoped it would have been, at 8 a.m., I should long ere

this have been well across the Channel. But it was no use grumbling over spilt milk; the only thing to do was to hope that the breeze would last at all events till midday, about which hour it generally has a tendency to subside.

A photographer made his appearance: was there ever an ascent without one? I was informed that he was employed on the establishment, and had been released from other duties so as to photograph the balloon; and considering the oscillation of the aerostat at the moment he uncovered his instrument, he succeeded much better than could have been expected.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE AIR OVER THE SEA.

“NOW then, sir, all ready; take your seat,” said Wright.

The wind was blowing over the factory shaft as I did so.

“Plenty of lifting power,” I observed.
“Let go.”

The balloon swayed backwards and forwards in the breeze. She did not rise. Wright took out two more bags of sand. There were then about seventeen left, weighing some 20 lbs., some less and some much more. The balloon began to leave the ground.

“She is rising well; give me the valve line, and let go the guy rope.”

As Wright did so he called out, “If

the balloon bursts in the air don't forget this line," pointing to a particular cord, "the balloon might then form a parachute."

Ere these words had left his lips I was some forty feet from the ground, and moving rapidly towards the tall factory shaft. Should I clear it or not. I calculated that there must be a collision if I had not more rising power. I had two bags of ballast ready in my hand. Over went one with a thud on the roof of a factory. Would the other be necessary? I thought not. This proved to be the case; I cleared the chimney by some twenty feet. It was a lovely morning. With the quantity of rising power in the balloon, owing to the loss of ballast, I rose rapidly. My aneroid barometer, which had been tested a few days previous by Negretti and Zambra, marked 2500 feet. The view was superb. The fields and

country became gradually dwarfed in the distance. A magnificent stratum of white clouds limited the view in a northern direction. Flossy, wavy clouds, rising one behind the other, extended in a horse-shoe form, and united as it were Folkestone to Dover. Ascending above this aërial *débris*, I looked down upon a pile of grey nebulous matter. The sun shining on it from time to time detached portions of the floating substance. They sailed away to various points of the compass—now like turreted castles, ten times larger than the old keep below me, they seemed to float towards the Channel, then like icebergs of the Polar Seas, they took a different direction, thus showing that the wind that day was by no means uniform, and that it was not at all certain that the same breeze would continue blowing which was rapidly carrying me between the castle and the pier.

All this time I had my back turned towards the sea. The crowds of people in the gas-works look like ants from my elevated position. The houses of Dover, reduced to the size of those constructed by children as toys, become each moment smaller.

The Castle, apparently only a few feet above them, assumes the dimensions of a large wedding-cake. The sun's rays, pouring down on the top and sides of the balloon, had already caused a considerable loss of gas. It streamed out of the neck of the aerostat, which, left open to allow for expansion, and just over my head, enabled me to see through the aperture to the safety valve, seventy feet above the car. This great loss of gas was a matter of some importance.

A thermometer which I had attached to the side of the car marked 70° in the sun, and at 3700 feet—the height which I

had by this time reached fifteen minutes after leaving the earth—it was oppressively warm, so much so that I put my pocket-handkerchief beneath my hat to shelter the nape of my neck from the rays. The balloon had turned. This constantly happens during aërial journeys. The aerostat working round and round, and describing a circle on its own axis. My back was now to Dover.

Making a three-quarters turn to the right I could see Folkestone and all the coast for miles in that direction, the white cliffs standing out with rugged abruptness. The sea, which from the altitude at which I was appeared comparatively speaking smooth, was studded with what seemed to be little specks, but which in reality were fishing-boats. The balloon continued circling. This brought the Dover and Calais packet-boat in sight. She was steaming rapidly

A Ride across the Channel,

towards the French port, and in an oblique direction to myself. In my car there was not the slightest motion. Still as possible it glided above the waves, and, a bad sailor, I could not help congratulating myself that I was not experiencing that up and down and rocking movement so extremely disagreeable in the Channel. The vessel was probably passing some hundred feet over the spot which, at a not distant date, may be traversed by a tunnel, should a set of speculators be allowed to endanger the safety of our island. We are a money-loving nation; of this there can be no doubt; but we spend vast sums annually in order to have the most efficient navy in the world. Should the tunnel be completed we could no longer trust so confidently to our wooden and iron walls. Fortifications would have to be erected at a great cost in the neigh-

bourhood of Dover, and should at any time any political complication arise between ourselves and France there would be constantly the fear of an invasion. It has been said that we in our turn might take Calais. People who talk like that forget that where we have one available soldier our neighbours have ten. England cannot compete with those countries where there is conscription. The Chairman of the Tunnel Company is the whip of the Liberal party. Let us hope that this will not bias our Government in its decision, and that the champagne lunches given by Sir W. Watkin, in order to gain over influential persons, will not produce the effect that the wily railway manager desires.

A train moving from the coast could just be discerned, mainly owing to the smoke it left in its track, and which slowly curling upwards in spiral coils was

striving apparently to join the horseshoe formation of clouds, the background of the British coast. The roar of the waves beating against the rocks could be distinctly heard, and bright flashes of light, now almost continuous, then intermitting for a second or two, could be seen from the direction of Dover Castle. It seemed as if some of the officers on duty there were signalling with a heliograph. I regretted that I had not mastered the code so as to have known whether they were endeavouring to communicate with me or not.

The air was light and charming to breathe, free as it was from the impurities that burden the atmosphere near the globe. My spirits rose. It was pleasant to be for the time in a region free from letters, with no post-office near, no worries, and above all no telegraphs. It would have puzzled even the Russians

to have forwarded me a despatch in the quarter where I was, although they had succeeded in sending me one when at Khiva. I was moving rapidly, and at about 4000 feet elevation according to my barometer, towards the French coast. The land was still hidden from the view, a mist enveloped it, and concealed the earth from my gaze. I threw over the car a small paper parachute attached to a silk line of fifty yards in length, at the same time looking at the second hand of my watch. In seven seconds the line had run out. Taking into consideration the attraction of the earth, and also the fact that the parachute would be acted on in a much less degree than the aerostat by the force of the wind, I calculated that I was moving at the rate of about twelve miles an hour, not nearly so rapidly as the balloon had progressed though the air a few minutes previous.

A haze now seems to rise from the waves, it obscures the white chalk cliffs of England; presently they change to a dark grey colour. They then take an ashen hue. The flashes of the heliograph become more indistinct. A mist looms in the distance.

Towns and villages on the English coast disappear from the landscape like shadows produced on a curtain by a magic lantern. That whilom flossy range of clouds that had attracted my attention, on first leaving the earth, becomes black as ink. Instead of the muslin-like appearance they had a few minutes ago, they seem as massive as the earth itself. Fifty-five minutes after leaving England, every trace of my native soil vanishes in the distance.

The sea was much less dotted with fishing-boats than it had been near Dover, and gradually fading away in the

gloom, I could just distinguish through my field-glass the packet on her way to Calais.

Presently appears a dark blue range of clouds before me—a long sandy shore now comes in sight. By degrees it separates itself from the overhanging mist. At 11.15 it stands out boldly, and in relief. Behind this line rises some slightly undulating land. A range of cliffs, similar to those I had left behind on the English coast, now comes in view. I am not far from the coast of France.

As the mist cleared away before me, I could see Boulogne distinctly; its harbour, and the white houses which line and flank the quai. My barometer marked 5500 feet, and the temperature in the shade had fallen to 40°. The sun was now hidden behind a cloud. If I had not been at so great an elevation, the northern coast of France

would have come in sight a long time before: as it was, the mist had concealed it from me. It was unfortunate that I had been compelled to ascend with so much rising power, in order to clear the factory chimney. This, and especially the heat of the sun at starting, had caused the balloon to lose an immense quantity of gas. Whilst continuing in the direction of France, I felt a cracking sensation in my ears.

From the experience gained in previous ascents, I well knew what this signified. The balloon was falling rapidly. I looked at my aneroid, it only marked 4000 feet. I had fallen 1500 feet in a very few minutes: and on tearing some pieces of paper from off a bundle of newspaper sheets that Mr. Wright had thoughtfully placed in the car, and throwing them overboard, instead of their disappearing below the balloon, they flew

over it, and fluttered in the air above. This was a clear proof of the extreme rapidity of the descent. The balloon had now, what sailors would term, way on her. It would be necessary to expend a considerable amount of ballast to check the fall, or I should be unpleasantly close to the water. The fact was that the balloon had entered a cold and damp layer of air—the gas had become condensed. The aerostat, instead of being quite full, as it had been a few minutes previous, was now seemingly one-tenth, or all the lower portion of her, empty. On looking again at my barometer, I found I was within 900 feet of the Channel. Over went one bag of ballast. There was no effect whatever; and paper thrown out appeared to ascend rapidly into higher regions. Another bag, and then another. The downward velocity of the balloon was now dis-

tinctly diminished ; and after scattering about 20 lbs. more sand out of a fourth sack into the sea, the aerostat began to take an upward turn. It was time : I was then only 500 feet from the water.

Very slowly I again climb into the clouds, and at the height of 1500 feet the balloon hangs in space—apparently balanced in the air, for the rise or fall is too slight to be detected by my throwing out paper or by the aneroid barometer.

I had been too much occupied during the last few minutes in regulating my descent, and arranging for the subsequent elevation of the aerostat, to notice the French coast. Judging by the velocity I had been travelling at a few minutes before, I ought to have been well over the shore. On looking in that direction, I found that the balloon was farther from France than she had been a few minutes previous. I took out my

compass—a present from an old friend, a soldier of fortune, alas ! killed in the Carlist war—and quickly took my bearings. The wind had veered round. It was now almost due east ; and I was rapidly being taken down Channel ; at the same time the sandy line which I had originally noticed, had completely disappeared. It was time to reflect as to what course to pursue. Whether to wait a while, hoping for the wind to change north, or to descend ; or, finally, to ascend and endeavour to get into a fresh current. I looked at the ballast-bags. There was still a large quantity of sand left ; but what with the heat of the sun continually causing the balloon to expand, and the occasional cold clouds which condensed the gas, it did not appear likely that I should be able to remain in the air above four hours more.

It seemed best to allow myself to drift

in mid-channel for awhile, in the hope that the wind might veer in a favourable direction. As I did so the coast of France became more indistinct. It was evident that if the breeze long continued I should soon be out of sight of the coast.

I again endeavoured to ascertain the velocity of the wind, and calculated that the balloon was not moving more than eight or nine miles an hour. This continued for awhile, when the breeze suddenly dropped. The globe hung motionless over the water at an elevation of 1400 feet.

It was a few minutes to twelve. I looked down from the car. Below me the sea was like a sheet of glass. There was not a movement or a ripple on the waters, save that caused from time to time by some wild-fowl. These birds seemed frightened at the presence of an aërial machine above them. They

dived below the surface, splashing as they disappeared, then emerging, gave vent to a shrill cry. It grated unpleasantly on the ear. It seemed to say, "What business have you there, interfering in our element. But you cannot remain up long ; you must soon descend, and the fishes will then avenge us for your meddlesome presence."

The surface below me was clear as crystal, quite calm, and of a beautiful dark green colour. The shadow of the balloon could be distinctly seen on the glass-like mirror. Here and there, farther off, the sea appeared to be of a different hue. Now a patch of ebon black met the eye. Then a few acres of water, which recalled to the memory the azure blue of the Mediterranean, till as far as the vision could reach the remainder of the Channel was tinged with an ashen grey. It was still warm, the thermometer

marking 68° , but the rays of the sun were then falling on the instrument.

Two fishing-boats were about a mile from the spot over which I was floating. Their crews made signs for me to descend into the water, and that they would pick me up. I replied to them by dropping a copy of the *Times* from the car for their edification. The newspaper did not swerve in its descent, but fell like a plummet into the water below me. On tearing up some small pieces of paper exactly the same thing occurred. They fell one after the other into the Channel, not diverging above a yard or so from each other.

The air was absolutely still. There was not a breath of wind. The balloon was becalmed over the waters. How long this would last it was impossible to say. I looked at my watch. It was 12.30. My interior organs began to

call attention to the fact that it was a long time since breakfast. I sat down on a sand-bag and opened my store of provisions, having a sandwich in one hand and my barometer in the other, so as to be able to know at once should the balloon take a turn downwards.

On several occasions during the previous half-hour I had been obliged to throw over a great deal of ballast, but the sun had disappeared behind a cloud, consequently there was now no expansion, and no escape of gas through the neck of the balloon. I again looked at my timepiece. The balloon had been one hour absolutely stationary. It would be better to try and find a lower current. I should not lose so much gas as would inevitably escape if I ascended. It appeared to me that there was a slight ripple over the water, which betokened a little wind. It is true that the breeze, if there

were one, might continue taking me down Channel, but anything would be preferable to the position in which I had found myself during the last hour. It was not necessary to pull the valve line to descend. The balloon began to sink of her own accord; and throwing out sand by degrees, and in small quantities at a time, I arrested her just 500 feet from the surface.

My surmise proved to be incorrect. There was no wind blowing. Whatever had caused the appearance of a ripple on the waters, it was not what I was vainly searching. A large shoal of fish was swimming in the water below the car. The two fishermen's boats now moved towards me. They waited for about a quarter of an hour under the balloon, then seeing that I showed no signs of descending, the men in them waved their hands and rowed off in

another direction. Gradually the boats disappeared in the mist. I was again quite alone, and to state the truth was not sorry that the fishermen had departed. For the temptation to give in had been great. Twenty times I said to myself how easy it would be to descend. There would be no risk, no difficulty in saving the balloon, and I need not even get a wetting. But then I had made up my mind to leave nothing unturned to get across the Channel. There were still five bags of ballast left, and besides this, there was the car which I could cut away on an emergency, when I might sit astride on the hoop. However, it was necessary to decide as to my plans, and that immediately. I lit a cigar, careless of the escaping gas, and forgetful of what Wright's wrath would have been if he could have seen me. I began seriously to reflect on-

my position. An hour had been wasted at an elevation of 500 feet, and a large quantity of ballast had been expended. There was no wind whatever. Would it not be better to ascend to a great altitude, and see if by doing so I could improve my situation ?

I looked at the thermometer, it marked 48° in the shade, and then threw over a bag of ballast, bag and all. It fell with a thud into the water, and the balloon rose to 3000 feet. Pieces of paper cast from the car still falling perpendicularly below the balloon. Another sack followed the first, but this time the noise of the splash did not reach my ears. The hand of my aneroid slowly turned. It marked 4000, 5000, 6000, and then 7500 feet.

I had three bags of ballast left. They were the largest that Wright had put in the car before my departure from Dover.

They had been used during the inflation of the balloon, and were filled with sand and stones. It would not have done to have thrown their contents out over the land, but it did not signify emptying them into the water. I picked out the smallest of the three, and discharged all that it contained. The balloon was quite full of gas by this time, owing to the expansion consequent on the diminishing pressure of the atmosphere. Upward I rose, and with great rapidity, pieces of paper thrown out from the car appearing to fall with considerable velocity. An idea flashed across my mind. It was to the effect that if the enterprising manager of the London daily paper who had wished to send a correspondent with me had done so, and could have seen his representative, he would at that moment have been rather alarmed for his safety. For the ballast I

had remaining added to the car only equalled the weight of a ten-stone man; and as I had made up my mind at all costs to effect my purpose, it was not impossible that I should have been obliged very much to my sorrow to drop his correspondent overboard.

Now I was 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. Not far from the summit of the balloon was a small grey cloud, much resembling a gigantic mackerel in shape. As I gazed upward it seemed to me that this fishy monster was moving in a southerly direction. I took out my compass. It had been carefully tested a few days before by an eminent firm of instrument makers. I was fairly right in my conjecture; but the wind was bearing more to the west than I had at first imagined.

In a few seconds the car was enveloped in the cloud. The pieces of paper

that fell from my hand streamed away from me in their descent. I threw over the parachute. From the pace the silk ran out it was clear that the balloon was moving at a considerable velocity, and, to my great satisfaction, in the direction of France. Now the harbour of Dieppe came in view, and so clearly was it defined that, taking out my pocket-book, I rapidly sketched the port. The weather was much colder; I had to stamp my feet from time to time to keep up the circulation of the blood.

CHAPTER III.

COMING DOWN.

I LOOKED at the thermometer, it marked 28° in the shade. There were only two bags of ballast left in the car. Very little for a fall from the elevation which I had attained. Under ordinary circumstances I should have caused the balloon to descend on reaching the French coast; but with the capricious nature of the wind who could tell that there might not be now below me a current which would again take the balloon out to sea? It was necessary to remain up a little longer in order to place several miles between myself and the coast. The warmth of the earth had caused the balloon to rise a few hundred feet. Then she began to

descend, but very slowly—a few pounds of ballast checking her downward course. At last I determined to descend to about 500 feet from the ground. One pull at the valve line, the first time I had touched it during the journey. The gas escaped at the top of the aerostat, the shutters of the valve giving a clear clicking sound as they sharply closed together. Now the fields and country came clearly in sight through the misty atmosphere.

It was easy to distinguish that I was no longer in England. For here women were mowing in a field; there a girl was carrying what seemed to be a hod of bricks across her shoulders. Farther on I passed over the head of a man ploughing with two oxen and a horse. I dropped a little fine sand on him, as the balloon rapidly flitted onward. The fellow started, not knowing from where the dust had fallen. Presently he looked straight

above him, and threw himself on his back, gazing into the clouds, with his hands stretched out in astonishment, and his legs in the air. "*Descendez ! descendez !*" cried some villagers outside a little inn ; and a gentleman, who from his garb I concluded was the priest of the place, ran out of a church to look upward at the aërial visitor.

There was a range of hills covered with brushwood about two miles from the balloon. Apparently there was also a valley which extended for some distance ere any more heights would be reached. It occurred to me that this valley would be a suitable place for the descent. However, I descended somewhat sooner than I anticipated. I was looking at some villages with my face away from the direction in which the aerostat was travelling, when the ground suddenly became more hilly. I was so

pleased at being across the Channel, that my thoughts were not sufficiently concentrated on the management of the balloon. Suddenly, on turning round, I saw that I was not more than twenty feet from the top of an eminence, and before I could throw out any ballast, my car came violently in collision with the ground. The balloon rebounded from the earth to a height of over one hundred feet. My thermometer and a rug were thrown into the field by the jerk.

A little ballast, half of my last bag, judiciously expended, sent me up about a thousand feet. I pulled the valve rope, not wishing to ascend higher, and in a few moments was over the valley where I had originally contemplated descending. There was a ploughed field just in front of the car. It would be a soft place for the fall. Keeping hold of the valve rope, I brought the balloon to

within eighty feet of the ground, and then threw over the remainder of my ballast with the grapnel, their entire weight amounting perhaps to about fifty pounds. This at once checked the speed at which I was falling. In another second the car was on the ground; the anchor did not catch in the furrows. It held for a second, and then broke loose, the balloon making a series of jumps into the air of from forty to fifty feet at a time. I all the while pulling the valve rope with one hand, and holding tight to the hoop of the aerostat with the other. Now the anchor dragged across a grip. The flukes caught in the bank on the other side.

There was not much wind. The two ranges of hills protected the valley from the breeze as I had anticipated. The balloon settled on the ground. Presently a labourer came running up. By

my instructions he seized the grapnel, and embedded its flukes more firmly in the bank. He was soon joined by several other people. They had hurried from a neighbouring village. The men stood round the car, and as by this time the balloon was completely crippled by the loss of gas she had sustained, I could leave my wicker-work basket.

It was an affair of a few minutes duration to pull the safety valve within reach by means of the netting, and to fasten an instrument on this piece of mechanism which would keep the shutters of the valve open. As I was doing this one of the rustics put his head into the balloon through the aperture, impelled by curiosity. He fell back at once, almost suffocated. He had inhaled some gas. This made the others more cautious. They did not approach so near, and I was not sorry, as otherwise

with their thick wooden sandals they might have damaged the balloon.

They were all very civil and obliging; and, in fact, in numerous descents that I have made in different places in England, never have I met with as much kindness and courtesy from the inhabitants as I received at the hands of these poor French labourers. They helped to detach the car from the netting, and finally aided in rolling up the balloon, and in depositing her safely in the car.

Great enthusiasm reigned amongst them. No balloon had ever descended in that district before, and numerous were the inquiries as to the journey.

“What, Monsieur has come from England!” cried one old man; and as he spoke a middle-aged female ran up out of breath and panting with her exertions. She embraced all the bystanders.

“Thank heavens, I too have seen it,” she cried. “It passed over my house like the dome of a cathedral; and all my hens are still in convulsions of fright at its appearance.”

Having an idea that damages might be asked for on account of the consternation caused amongst the poultry, I gravely assured her that the apprehensions of her hens would not diminish, but rather increase their laying powers. There was a general kissing on both cheeks all round. Everybody hugged his neighbour, and many were the congratulations that they—and they alone—had seen my descent. It was said that the Doctor, the great philosopher of the place, would be miserable that he had not been present: and what would Jean, the rich butcher, say—Jean, who owned about two hundred hectares of land—that he had been absent on this occasion. However, the majority

of the spectators were delighted that neither Jean nor the Doctor had been there—as both these gentlemen were great talkers ; and it would be pleasant to be able to relate what had occurred, and to be the bearers of the news themselves.

A middle-aged man, in a blouse, appeared, and respectfully inquired where Monsieur, who had just descended from the clouds, would take up his quarters for the night.. Monsieur Varrall, the proprietor of the Château de Montigny, was away from home ; but he, the speaker, was the farmer who rented some of Monsieur Varrall's land. Would I honour him by accepting his hospitality ? “ What will Jean, the butcher, and the Doctor say, if the stranger does accept ? ” was observed by the bystanders. “ How angry they will be not to have had the opportunity of entertaining him them-

selves.” The farmer had a cheery, genial face; he said that he had already sent for a cart to carry the balloon to his house—so at the risk of incurring the wrath of Monsieur the doctor, and of Monsieur the butcher, I at once accepted his offer. Now that this was done, the farmer assumed an air of authority. He saw to the distribution of the English money, which I had given for the services rendered me by the men who had helped to pack up the balloon. Half-a-sovereign gave him a little trouble. He had never seen half-a-sovereign before. “It was twelve and a half francs,” I added—but it was a novelty; a labourer now announced his readiness to change it, in order probably to keep the ten-shilling piece as a memento of the descent.

“How sorry Monsieur Varrall will be,” whispered the farmer, “that he is

away from home. For Monsieur Varrall is the son of an Englishman—although he is a naturalized Frenchman—but how pleased he would have been to have entertained you to-night. He will be glad that you are with me," he added; "and the best my wife and I have on our farm shall be at your disposal."

A long narrow cart, drawn by a sturdy grey horse, now appeared on the ground. There was a little difficulty in placing the car on the vehicle, which was somewhat narrow. At last this was accomplished satisfactorily.

Half an hour afterwards, I found myself seated by a large wood fire in my host's, Monsieur Barthelémy Delanray's kitchen. His good wife was busy preparing for me a delicious *omelette aux oignons* and some *pigeons sautés*, with chestnuts and vegetables. They were followed by a sort of Neuchatel cheese.

In the meantime the farmer had produced a bottle of Bordeaux and a jug of cyder—cyder, he said, such as we drink ourselves. It was excellent: and after a cup of coffee, served by the hostess, I felt that I had indeed fallen into good quarters; and that a balloon descent in Normandy was certainly preferable to one in Essex.

“Draw your chair close to the hearth, Monsieur,” said the farmer’s wife, giving me a light for my cigar; and she pointed to one of those enormous fire-places such as are to be seen in some old feudal residences in the present day in England, but which are more often conspicuous by their absence. Some huge logs of heavy wood gave a genial warmth to the room. The sound of wheels was heard near the door. The farmer’s son, a tall lad of eighteen years of age, who was shortly to serve as a conscript,

went out to see who were the new arrivals. He returned in an instant, and with a grave face. Jean, the butcher, and the Doctor had driven over with the chief mason in the neighbouring village. They had come to pay their respects to the gentleman who had descended from the clouds. The farmer's face lengthened. He had not expected this addition to the family circle, but at once rose and welcomed the visitors. The Doctor, a little man, led the advance guard of the new arrivals. Having been presented to me by the farmer, he in his turn introduced Monsieur Jean "le Boucher" and Monsieur the Mason. The butcher, a tall, fine, strong-built fellow, was dressed in the blue coat which in all countries seems to be the garb selected for the slaughterers of sheep and oxen. The little doctor was courteous to a degree, but slightly

pompous withal. The butcher was grandiloquent and rather hoarse. He was rich, and was aware of the importance his wealth gave him amongst his neighbours. His was a generous disposition. From under the blue coat peeped the neck of a bottle. This he announced was champagne, which he had brought with him in order to fête the English aeronaut. Chairs were drawn round the fire, and for the fourth time I had to recapitulate the events of my journey. Then each one said he would have liked to have accompanied me in the excursion, and as the wine and cyder freely circulated, and the smoke of cigars and pipes rose to the ceiling, all were unanimous, that to travel in the clouds was the only really enjoyable means of locomotion. The doctor took great interest in my journey. He was an authority in the district. He told the rest of the

company of Gambetta's ascent from Paris, and when the name of the great tribune was mentioned in connexion with a balloon, and it was remembered that I had arrived in one of these aërial machines, some of the fame of Gambetta attached itself at once to me.

"There will be one day a universal republic," said the doctor, "a universal republic where there will be no wars, where we shall all be brothers—"

"And where we shall all go in balloons," interrupted the butcher.

"Let us drink to universal brotherhood," said the medical gentleman, and we clinked glasses all round.

"You will have a republic soon in your country," he added.

"I hope not," I replied; "it is such an expensive form of government."

"Expensive!" said the doctor, with a short laugh. "Why, there are no kings,

no queens, no fat priests doing nothing and living upon others."

"But then you have several hundred deputies who all of them are paid by the State, and they have lately come to the conclusion that they themselves ought to settle the amount of wages they should receive. According to republican notions they are your servants, and yet you see the servants dictating to the masters what salary they, the masters, should give them. Our government with Mr. Gladstone—"

"Ah, I have heard that name," said one of the party. "He is a great man. He likes the poor to share with the rich."

"He has given the farmers the land they till in Ireland, has he not?" said my host.

"He likes to be popular with the electors," I observed; "and it is an easy

way to obtain popularity to take twenty-five per cent. from the pockets of landlords and give it to tenants."

"I wish we had him here," exclaimed a man. "Land is very dear. I pay eighty francs a hectare," he added, "and if it were not for the apple-trees and cyder, I could not make both ends meet."

But the evening was drawing on. I was very tired, and the visitors withdrew. The following morning, Monsieur Barthelémy Delanray, my hospitable host, drove me to Dieppe, and we said "Good-bye," he at the same making me promise solemnly that the "*next time*" I descended with a balloon in that neighbourhood I would again honour his house with my presence.

CHAPTER IV.

IN A FIRE BALLOON OVER LONDON.

IT was a hot summer night in July, 1864. In company with some brother subalterns I had gone to Cremorne Gardens to smoke a cigar, and listen to a band in the open air. There was to be an ascent the following day. It had been advertised in the newspapers for weeks previous. It was not to be effected with the ordinary gas-balloon, but with one of a kind that had never ascended in this country before, namely, with a fire or Montgolfier balloon, which system, first discovered and used in France in the last century, was very shortly afterwards superseded by gas-

aerostats, such as are employed in the present day.

However, Monsieur Godard, a French aeronaut, had brought one of the old-fashioned balloons to England, and Mr. Smith, the enterprising lessee of Cremorne, determined to take advantage of it, and have an ascent made from the gardens. This fire-balloon, it was stated, was of enormous size, four times as large as the Mammoth, one of the biggest aerostats in England. There would be additional excitement for the public, as the Montgolfier might catch fire in the air, and the people in the car would run the risk of being roasted as well as of breaking their necks.

Presently I met a captain in my regiment; he was talking to the manager of the gardens and to a short, thick-set man, whose dark features, close-shaven face, and moustache, betokened his *Gallic* nationality.

“This is Godard, Fred,” whispered the captain into my ear. You know, the man who is going up in the fire-balloon to-morrow.”

“Very good fun, I should think,” I remarked.

In those days I had hardly ever seen a balloon, save the toys that could be purchased at a bazaar.

“Fun, indeed,” said the captain, who for brevity let me call Dick; “fun, with the chance of being burnt, as well as of being smashed. You would not think it fun if you went up with him.”

I was a little nettled at this, and, without taking time to reflect, said,—

“I should be delighted to ascend, if Monsieur Godard would take me.”

On this being mentioned to the aeronaut, he at once acquiesced; but with two conditions: first, that I was to pay five pounds for the journey, and, secondly,

that I was to help in keeping up the fire in the furnace when in the air.

“Capital,” said Dick, when this arrangement had been made. “Now, I will go and tell all my friends, so that they may be here to-morrow to see you ascend.”

The following afternoon I found myself again in the gardens. They were crowded with visitors. The weather was fine and calm, and Monsieur Godard and his assistants were busy making arrangements for the ascent. A piece of ground about sixty yards square, near a little wooden building, known as the Sibyl’s House, had been railed off for the occasion. In the middle of this space two masts had been erected, each of them standing at least 100 feet in height. They were about 120 feet apart. A rope ran over pulleys fastened to the summit of each of these poles. This

cord, which was now slackened, kept suspended at about forty feet from the grass what seemed to be the top of an enormous bell-tent, the walls of which lay on the ground, and covered a large piece of the enclosed area. Some iron hoops, about five feet in diameter, had been placed beneath the calico, in one particular place, and they held up the material. Godard and his assistant were thus enabled to walk under the hoops, and so to the centre of the balloon. Here and on the ground was an enormous wooden car of a circular shape, and at least nine feet in diameter. In the centre of the car was a large iron furnace. A chimney from it extended about thirteen feet upwards into the balloon. There was no netting of any description from which to hang the heavy car, doubly heavy on account of the furnace it carried. Some cords

were stitched to the sides of the balloon, and then to the car. These stitches would have to bear the weight of the wood-work and the passengers, as well as the inevitable jerk and drag during the descent to the ground. A stack of straw stood not far from the passage made under the calico by the iron hoops.

Godard and his two assistants were busy placing trusses of this inflammable substance into the furnace. A hundred men standing round the sides of the balloon were holding each one a piece of the calico in his hands.

The curiosity of the public, as well, indeed, as of scientific men, was very great. Amongst other persons present was the celebrated aeronaut, Mr. Coxwell, and I can remember well his criticism about there being no netting to the balloon, and nothing to hold the heavy car save the stitches. As for myself, I

did not understand what was going to happen. I had no idea that the huge mass of calico would in a very short time be elevated to the altitude of the masts, and that shortly afterwards I should find myself with a hot iron furnace nine inches from my body on one side, and be overhanging an abyss above 1000 feet in depth on the other. "Where ignorance is bliss," runs the old adage. I was ignorant, and did not realize what was going to occur.

In the meantime I received the congratulations of Dick's friends, all of whom had come to the gardens with the express intention, they said, of seeing me go up. Presently Godard lit the straw in the furnace. The fire roared up through the chimney. In a very few minutes the gigantic aerostat began to distend. The men holding the calico had difficulty in retaining it in their

grasp. They had to walk towards the car, owing to the immense pressure caused by the expansion of the air. As the globe rose the rope keeping the top of the balloon from the flames was gradually tightened. In about half an hour the aerostat was full, and stood up perpendicularly between the two masts. In the meantime the cord that had held up the balloon had been removed. All was ready for a start. I must say the prospect of a ride in such a conveyance was not half so agreeable as it had appeared a few minutes before. The flames from the straw were roaring up at least twenty feet into the balloon through the chimney. Sparks were flying about in all directions, in some instances alighting on the calico and on the trusses of straw to be used as fuel during the journey, and which were attached by cords to the sides of the car.

“Now then,” said Dick, “get in, and take your seat.”

I was about to do so, cursing between my teeth the folly that had induced me to say I would go, when Monsieur Godard approached and said in French, “that he was very sorry, but that the balloon, owing to the warmth of the weather, had not sufficient rising power—that he wished to ascend very fast in order to avoid striking the masts, and in consequence he could not take me.”

I felt as if a load had been taken off my mind.

“Thank heavens,” I thought to myself; and then aside to my captain, “Very sorry, Dick—a great nuisance, but Godard says he cannot take me, as I am too heavy.”

“Too heavy!—nonsense,” said my brother officer; “and after all my

friends have come here to see you go up. You must ascend: they will say you funk."

I did funk, that was the honest truth, and very much, but I did not like being told so.

Godard was in the act of giving the order to the men to let go the cords—the car was still on the ground. In another instant it was rising rapidly, and about five feet from the earth. The furnace and chimney were between my body and Godard. The aeronaut could not see me. I seized the car, and vaulted into it. The balloon, which was going up splendidly and with great rapidity, descended with a bump. Sixteen stone was too much for the balloon's rising power. Godard and his assistants could not understand what had happened. The Frenchman seized trusses of straw, and pushing them into the furnace filled

it to its summit. The flames roared thirty feet into the aerostat—sparks fell about in all directions. The air became very much rarefied, and up we went. But very slowly. About eighty feet from the ground the aerostat was blown against the top of one of the masts. The pole resisted the pressure for a moment, then gave, finally falling with a crashing noise on the roof of the Sibyl's house, considerably damaging that edifice.

There was not much wind, and very slowly the balloon took her course towards the south-east of London. Every part of the huge city gradually came in sight, and the panorama before us, if not worth the risk of the journey, was, at all events, "a very magnificent spectacle," as a fellow-passenger, Mr. Prowse, afterwards wrote in the columns of the *Daily Tele-*

graph. "The whole expanse of the mighty city was visible;" dense clouds curtained it in and covered it with a mysterious haze; slowly sank the great red sun—slowly rose the great white moon—away over the open fields gathered the mists of the night. The wonderful roar of London rose up through the evening air, like the passionate clamour, impatient, querulous, irresistible, of the sea, and behind each gazer, close to his head, was the roaring and raging of the furnace. The red light glared, and was seen afar.

The heat was almost painful, but the sight was worth the peril, and neither amongst Englishmen nor Frenchmen was a murmur heard, as steadily one after another the trusses of straw were passed into the fire. The long lines of the bridges—the dim outlines of familiar buildings—rose upon the view. At no

time did the balloon ascend much above half a mile, and at no time did that ugly, roaring, crackling clamour cease.

At length, after crossing and re-crossing the river, Godard determined to descend. Three times already had the balloon passed over the Thames, and when it was resolved to alight we were over the Isle of Dogs. Monsieur Godard had fixed his eye, however, upon the East Greenwich marshes, as an open space in which the descent could be safely attempted. Skilfully calculated were his manœuvres. Traversing the Thames at an exceedingly low elevation, the balloon grounded upon the shore within a dozen yards of the water. Distinctly to understand the fierce excitement of the next three minutes, it should be borne in mind that the fire was still roaring merrily away; that the machinery, so admirable for its special

purpose, would have caused sad havoc had there been a general upset; and that at this moment six men could exert very little control over a balloon capable of containing 400,000 cubic feet of air. Touching the shore the balloon tore away, the big canvas flapping, the bright fire burning, whilst right in front rose a stone embankment. The steeps were rough. Just before each bump, however, men made a little leap, and thus baulked its force as a cricketer to catch a ball draws back his hand instead of protruding it. Still, with all these precautions, it was a nasty drive, it occupied perhaps a minute—it seemed half an hour, and there was a strong inclination to cheer when the threatening stones were passed. On now into a potato-field, another rise, a wild tendency to leap a chimney; a strong exhibition of restraint in the shape of

a hundred sensible Englishmen tugging away at the ropes and obeying the orders that were given, and the whole thing was over. Such were the observations of my friend the late Mr. Prowse with reference to the journey. His description, which is singularly graphic, thoroughly describes the scene.

The balloon, if I remember right, made but one more ascent. On the third occasion it caught fire when being inflated, and was burnt to ashes—luckily for the passengers the conflagration took place before they were in the air. From that time no further public experiments have been made with Montgolfier balloons. They are too cumbersome, having to be five times as large as gas aerostats to attain the same rising power. Again, it is very difficult to inflate them, save when the weather is perfectly calm ; finally, the risk of the

calico catching fire in the air is considerable.

Not long ago some private experiments were made with a fire-balloon by the military authorities; but a very few trials convinced these gentlemen that our great-grandfathers were wise in their generation when they abandoned the Montgolfier system, and inflated their balloons with hydrogen instead of hot air. For military purposes the fire-balloon has only one advantage. It can be rapidly filled, that is, in fine weather. The cost of inflation is one-tenth that of gas; and straw, with other combustible substances, is readily to be found; whilst it is not easy always to meet with a gasometer, or obtain steel filings and sulphuric acid with which to manufacture gas.

But I had almost forgotten to mention my interview with the French

aeronaut a few days after the adventure. He was accompanied by a friend. On seeing me he spoke to his companion, when the latter said, in broken English, "Ah, sare, you did do one sacré wrong the oder day when you do mount; when you do ascend with Monsieur Godard. He had arranged the equilibre, the equipoise of the balloon. It was magnifique. He ascend not very rapidly, but he do ascend. But, sare, you leap, you sauter, you throw your carcase into the car. He descend, he bomp, but he put queek fire, and he rise once more; but too lentement, the balloon strike the mast at eighty feet from the ground, and it break. It fall on the house of the lady you call the Sibyl. It might have fallen on the head of the multitude, and then, sare, you be much assassin."

Poor Godard! I thoroughly deserved

his censure. But I knew little of balloons in those days, and had not realized how I had endangered the lives of my fellow-passengers by my folly.

CHAPTER V.

AN ACCIDENT IN THE AIR.

SOME years had gone over my head since my journey with Monsieur Godard in his Montgolfier. In the meantime I had made some excursions in gas-balloons with the experienced aeronaut, Mr. Coxwell.

Several of my brother officers had taken a fancy to aeronautics. Indeed, few months passed without one or other of us ascending for a trip to the clouds. One man (a lieutenant in the regiment) had become so enamoured with this kind of locomotion, that he had purchased a balloon; and sometimes he and I used to go alone in his aerostat, managing the machine ourselves.

On one occasion we started from Windsor; and after about two hours I found myself above my native town, and two thousand feet over my father's garden. The old gentleman was cutting some roses; and chancing to look upwards, saw a balloon above him. Knowing my taste for this kind of amusement, he said, "I should not be surprised if my boy were in the car;" and ordered the servants not to go to bed—such a presentiment he had that I should arrive in the evening and require supper; and great was his pleasure when he found that he had not been wrong in his surmise.

I had joined the Aeronautical Society, and in the company of the scientific men who belonged to that association, had learned many a wrinkle as to the management of balloons.

But time went on, and still it seemed

that with all our knowledge we were no more advanced than men were in the last century, so far as the guidance of balloons was concerned. All kinds of ingenious models were year after year shown at our annual meetings. Models worked by a spring, which would go in the direction the inventor wished in a room, but which would have been utterly useless out of doors and in a wind.

One day, whilst pondering over this subject, and racking my brains in the endeavour to think of some way to master the secret of aërial navigation, a newspaper was put into my hand. It contained an advertisement of a new discovery. It was stated that a distinguished French aeronaut would shortly make an ascent in a balloon of his own invention; that the car would be provided with machinery, and that this machinery, when set in motion, would enable the operator to

guide the aerostat at will. A few days afterwards I went to Cremorne to see the aerostat. It was then inflated with ordinary air, and exhibited in a large hall allotted for that purpose. Instead of being of the ordinary pear shape, the balloon was in the form of a gigantic barrel, but pointed at both ends. In the car there were two wheels with spokes, by which the wheels could be made to revolve. On conversing with the French aeronaut, I learned that if the two wheels were set in motion, they in their turn would cause to revolve two large sets of screw-fans placed above the car; and the inventor declared that according to the angle at which these fans were set, would depend the direction the balloon would travel.

I must say I was rather sceptical as to the invention. However, I kept my doubts to myself; and having proposed

to the Frenchman that I should accompany him on his journey, he consented, subject to the payment of the usual honorarium, and my agreeing to aid in turning the wheels.

The day fixed for the ascent was duly announced in the newspapers. Many people went to the gardens at the time appointed, in order to see the new invention. However, there was not the same crowd as usual. The weather did not look very propitious for the ascent. The sky was overcast, heavy showers every then and anon fell on the balloon as it lay stretched on the ground previous to its inflation. Another difficulty arose. the Frenchman could not speak English, hence he had considerable trouble in making himself understood by the numerous assistants. Gradually the balloon rose under the immense pressure of gas brought to bear. Owing to the

rain it was an hour later than the time fixed for the ascent before the balloon was inflated. It looked, as we were sitting in the car, like a gigantic cigar ship, or cylinder pointed at both ends, floating in the netting some forty feet above our heads. In an ordinary pear-shape balloon it is easy to reach the neck of the aerostat, which is always left open to allow for expansion after leaving the earth, as the neck is not above seven or eight feet from the car; but owing to the peculiar formation of the Frenchman's machine there was no possibility after leaving the ground of reaching this aperture. The ropes that held the car came down from the sides of the balloon and if these ropes had been climbed, the climber would still have had a distance of at least twenty feet between himself and the neck of the aerostat.

I should here say, that as it takes some little time to attach a car to its netting, and to duly arrange as to the weight of ballast to be carried, it is customary in England to tie up the neck of the balloon with a piece of silk whilst this is going on, the silk being untied just before leaving the ground. This is done in order not to allow the gas to be deteriorated by its mixing with the air until the last moment. After once leaving the ground this deterioration is constantly going on ; hence even if a balloon were perfectly gas-tight so far as her silk case is concerned, the mere fact of her neck having to be left open when in the air to allow for expansion would cause her to be constantly losing lifting power. Some people who do not understand the subject are under the impression that a balloon will stay up a long time in the

atmosphere. This is not the case; it would have to be a very large balloon, one containing at least 80,000 feet of gas, for two men to remain up forty-eight hours; and then it would depend very much upon the weather, for if there is much sun the gas expands rapidly, and pours out of the neck of the aerostat. If there is a cold cloud the gas becomes condensed, and the balloon immediately begins to fall. Of course in a captive balloon, which is not quite filled with gas, in order to allow for expansion, and where the neck is fastened up, there is not this waste of hydrogen, but in the free aerostat waste must be constantly going on.

Hence I utterly disbelieve in the feasibility of a voyage to the Pole by a balloon. By using a trail rope to keep the aerostat at a certain altitude there would not be the same

escape of gas owing to expansion, but the jerks which would inevitably ensue as the cord caught in the icebergs would be extremely destructive to the netting. I should say to any man who came to me and asked me to subscribe to the expenses of a balloon Polar journey: What size balloon do you propose to employ? Then, how many people do you mean to take up with you? What will be their weight, and the weight of the car and provisions, as well as that of the balloon and netting? Deducting the total from the original lifting power of the gas would show the weight of ballast that could be carried. I should then say to the gentlemen: Hire the largest balloon in the country; use a trail rope if you like; and start when the wind is blowing from the east. Have a boat to follow you if you require one, and see how long you can keep in the air.

Once let this be definitely settled, and then come and ask for subscriptions for a Polar voyage, if you think that any one will be foolish enough to give you them. *Mais revenons à notre ballon.*

We had taken our seats; there were three of us—Monsieur the Frenchman, his assistant, and myself. I thought we were about to ascend immediately. However, the aeronaut called out in French, "I will now show the great advantage of my invention. I will take ballast out of the car, until five pounds more abstracted from it would cause us to rise; but those five pounds shall remain inside. We will then work the wheels which set in motion my screw-fans. They will revolve in the air; as they do so, we shall leave the ground."

It was an interesting experiment, and I was curious to see the result. It amounted to this: that the strength of

three men applied to Monsieur's machinery, acting upon the air, was to lift five pounds weight from the ground. I must say the Frenchman was an enthusiast; he believed implicitly in his invention. We were seated in the car, one behind the other, and busily engaged turning the wheels with all our force. The fans revolved at a tremendous pace; we perspired, the people laughed; nothing was the result. A little tired of these exertions, and having some ballast-bags beside me, I took a small one in my hand, and, without saying a word to the Frenchman, let it drop over the side of the car.

We began to rise at once. Monsieur, thinking this was owing to his invention, called out for us to make more strenuous exertions. The wind blew the balloon across the Thames. We were over the river. The cold of

the atmosphere suddenly condensed the gas, and we began to fall. But the Frenchman was so full of his invention, that he paid no attention to our descent. In another second we should have been in the water: enveloped as we were by ropes and netting, our position would not have been an agreeable one. Taking a large bag of ballast, I dropped it into the river. Up the balloon shot, much to the indignation of Monsieur, who had heard the splash, and who declared that as we had risen by our own exertions in the garden, so if we had continued to work at the machinery when over the river, it would have been unnecessary to expend ballast.

We were about 3000 feet high, and moving east. The last notes of a triumphal march played by the band in Cremorne to celebrate our ascent

had just died away. I was making a mental conjecture as to where we should be likely to descend, when suddenly the Frenchman, looking up, appeared to be considerably alarmed. He said something to his companion. The same consternation was visible on his assistant's countenance. I gazed upward, and for the moment did not remark anything peculiar, till I observed that the balloon, which was not full, but which had many loose folds in her when we left the earth, was now quite full, and that the neck of the aerostat, which should have been left open for the escape of gas, was tied up securely with a silk pocket-handkerchief. At the same time the valve line, which should have passed through the opening into the car, was far from our reach, inside the balloon. There was, as I have explained, owing to the peculiar

shape of the Frenchman's aerostat, no possible way of climbing up the ropes to the neck. Each moment we were ascending; each moment the pressure of the atmosphere was diminishing; each moment our gas was expanding. It was as clear as possible—our balloon must burst; nothing we could do would prevent this. It was an exciting but critical situation; for here we were several thousand feet over the suburbs of London, and each second was bringing us nearer to eternity.

I only remember on one other occasion in my life experiencing somewhat similar sensations. It was a good many years ago, when quartered at the Regent's Park barracks. In those days I was passionately devoted to gymnastic exercises. One evening I had returned from a walk in Hyde Park. An old brother officer was seated under the trees in the

barrack-yard. Some masons had been repairing the roof of the barracks. They had left the ladder, which was made up of two smaller ones tied together, slanting against the roof of the building; the height from the area basement to the summit being perhaps about sixty-five feet.

“You will not go up the ladder and then come down it by the rungs, only using your hands,” said the adjutant.

“Why that is easy enough,” I exclaimed; and putting down my umbrella, I ran up to the top of the ladder, and then turning my body, and passing my left hand over one of the rungs, allowed myself to swing round, thus being suspended under the eaves of the building, and over the area. However, I had not calculated upon one thing, which was that the ladder was not fastened where it touched the ground. It

was placed on some stone slabs, which were rather slippery, for it had been raining. As I turned, the ladder turned too, and began to fall in a slanting direction down the side of the roof. It was a disagreeable moment, something had to be done at once to check its descent. The only way to do this was to change the centre of gravity on the ladder, and, letting myself fall about three feet, I caught a rung further down, and on the opposite side to that towards which the ladder was slipping. This had the desired effect. A few seconds later I was safely on *terra firma*.

But now I was in the car of a balloon. There was no possibility of doing anything which could prevent the aerostat bursting. We looked at each other, and said nothing. Our silence expressed more than words could have done. How long did this state of things last? was it a few seconds, was it a minute? I cannot

say. It seemed an hour. At last there was a cracking sound. It reminded me of what one hears sometimes in a ball-room, when an awkward man treads on a lady's dress. The balloon had split, from where the neck had been tied to a place within a few feet of the top. The gas rushed out through the opening. We began to fall very rapidly.

Faster and faster became our descent. It seemed as if all were over, when the pressure of the descending bag of silk on the atmosphere caused the lower part of the balloon to be forced into the upper portion of the netting, thus forming as it were something like the roof of a shed, and acting like a gigantic parachute in the air. This stopped the velocity of our fall, and a short time afterwards we landed in a grass field about three miles from the place where the accident had occurred.

CHAPTER VI.

THE USE OF BALLOONS IN WAR.

ALTHOUGH there are some people behind the age they live in, and who look upon aeronautics from a military point of view with contempt, there are others, and very high authorities—men who have seen service in every part of the globe—who are well aware of the value an aerostat can be to the commander of an army. Amongst these gentlemen I may cite Sir Garnet Wolseley. In his work, "The Soldiers' Pocket Book," he wrote: "One of the most effective means of learning the whereabouts and doings of an enemy is by means of balloons." Many years ago, and but a short time after the discovery made by Montgolfier, French

generals frequently employed aerostats in the time of war. The French Directory ordered a certain Monsieur de Coute to form an aerostatic institution. The Ecole Polytechnique was used for that purpose. The various Republican armies were supplied with balloons for reconnoitring purposes. Colonel Cou-
telle, who was with General Jourdan, the commander of the Sambre and Meuse army, profited by the use of a balloon at Maubenge, near Mayence. Not a single movement of the enemy escaped the eyes of the staff-officers in the car. They informed their leader as to all that was going on around them, by writing the result of their observations on pieces of paper, and by then throwing their despatches down to the ground. Eventually the enemy brought a battery of artillery to play upon the aerostat. A seventeen-pounder fired on the balloon

for some time. No damage was done, but it was considered advisable to lower the globe. Subsequently the aeronauts ascended again, the enemy's battery having been driven back from its position.

Later on, the machine was moved nearly thirty-six miles to Charleroi. Ropes were attached to the netting of the balloon. Men holding these ropes marched along the road, allowing the aerostat to float in the air above their leader. This was done in order not to block the path, and to allow transport to pass freely along the route and beneath the balloon. A general officer ascended, and made a reconnaissance of the enemy's dispositions at Charleroi. On the morrow the battle of Fleurus was fought. The information gained as to the movements of the Austrians was of the greatest use to the French commander.

The Austrians later on declared that it appeared to them as if the French general's eyes were in their camp, for he had been able by means of the information obtained to know everything that was passing in the Austrian lines. Aerostats were employed on various other occasions; and here I may mention that they were used in 1799 before Mentz and Ehrenbreitstein.

The late Emperor Napoleon ordered Godard, the French aeronaut, to make ascents with staff-officers in his car during the Italian campaign. Much information was gained as to the enemy's whereabouts by means of an aerostat, previous to the battle of Solferino. During the war between the North and South in America the intelligent Yankees employed captive balloons. Colonel Beaumont, who was with General McClellan's army in 1862, has described the

system adopted by the Americans. He said: "It was at Sains Mill that I first saw the balloon. It was then with the advance guard of the army under General Sherman, the main body being some two days' march behind, and, so far as I could learn, no difficulty had been experienced in causing the balloon to accompany the advance, which, indeed, is its proper place. It can be allowed in still weather to rise some twenty or thirty feet so as to clear obstacles, and the men holding the guy ropes march regularly along. If the wind be at all high it is necessary to discharge the gas. The staff and apparatus were as follows:—One chief aeronaut, professor, and a civilian, but who was given, I believe, military rank; one captain's assistant, and fifty non-commissioned officers and men. There were then present with the army two balloons and two generators.

Whenever the weather was sufficiently calm, the balloon was up bearing over the camp at altitudes varying from 500 to 1000 feet, and reports were sent in daily, or oftener if need be, of the observations taken, noticing any change that might have taken place in the disposition of the troops or appearance of any works visible. Evening and morning were found to be the times generally best suited for observation, as the air was clearer and the shadows were larger. The balloons were made of the best silk very strongly sewn, and were inflated with hydrogen produced from two generators, which were simply large wooden boxes lined with some material not acted on by sulphuric acid, and mounted on wheels, each being capable of being drawn by four horses. The gas was generated by the action of sulphuric acid and water on iron, and was passed through two lime purifiers

before being delivered into the neck of the balloon. The balloons kept their gas for a fortnight—that is, having been filled up they still retained after that time sufficient ascending power to be of use. The guy lines were three in number—one thicker than the other two, the intention being that one should take the main strain, the others acting simply as guys.

“The method of manipulation was carried out as follows: The main rope was passed through a snatchblock, firmly attached to the ground, and each of the three having been manned by some ten men, the machine was allowed to rise. Communication was maintained when the altitude was small by shouting, and at 1000 feet messages were written on a bit of paper, and dropped with a stone to the ground. Telegraphic communication was also established. Indeed, at the

battles that resulted in McClellan being driven back from Richmond, the instrument in the car of the balloon was in communication with the wires leading to Washington, so that the President sitting in his closet might literally receive earlier intelligence than the general in the field of the turn the battle was taking." At Sains Mill Colonel Beaumont made some ascents ; he could thus judge practically of the advantages to be gained by balloon *reconnoissances*. He thus describes what he saw : " From the top of the hill whence the balloon was raised, my vision was bounded all round by trees, so that I could in no direction see farther than half a mile. As we rose, it was curious and beautiful to watch the gradual extension of the horizon ; first the country appeared all wood, from the eyes enfolding, as it were, the tops of the trees ; next open spaces began to show them-

selves nearly beneath the car, and then, as the altitude increased, they could be seen further out. Looking more closely I could distinguish roads here and there crossing the open, and where the direction was favourable, I could trace them through the woods. The Chickahominy, like a silver thread, half hid in the line of trees that shaded its banks, lay beneath me, all signs of its forming the centre of a valley being lost, as from the car of a balloon one cannot trace the difference between hill and plain, owing to there being nothing to guide the eye. After getting, as it were, my air-legs, and becoming accustomed to the situation, my first anxiety was to see the Confederate soldiers, and my next to look at Richmond. So far as the enemy's army was concerned, I could only see their pickets thrown forward to the banks of the Chickahominy, with their supports

on the heights behind them ; no army was near them, unless it was concealed in the woods, whose tree-tops only I could see. These woods were certainly big enough to have contained 50,000 men, provided they remained still, and did not light any fires, both somewhat unlikely provisions. But Richmond—the looked-for goal, the capital of rebellion—lay clear enough away to the westward, with the sun glancing on the roofs and the church steeples, showing up above their neighbouring buildings ; the city could be distinctly made out. To get that place that then lay so temptingly beneath me more blood was to be shed than possibly any other struggle in modern war had cost ; and yet at that time the Federals were confident enough, and the expectation of soon being able to judge for themselves gave a double interest as to the inquiries as to what

Richmond looked like. I could see the three camps of the Confederates round the place—one of them at Manchester, on the James River—but the distance, some ten miles, was too great for me to distinguish more than the bare fact of there being three camps, and make the very roughest possible guess as to their size. I could make out earthworks, thrown up apparently to bar the main approaches to Richmond, but of their character or strength I could judge little. Had the army got so near Richmond that the balloon could have ascended within three miles, a report of the nature of the defences could no doubt have been made—which would have cost a *reconnoissance*, supported by a strong force, to have attained it in any other manner. I was present when the firing of a battery of artillery was directed from the balloon."

From this account we see that the Americans were fully alive to the advantages of having a balloon corps. A few years afterwards one was formed in Paris; the balloon station being placed under the management of the veteran aeronaut Godard. The aerostats themselves were of a large size, containing on an average 70,000 cubic feet of gas, and thus giving the aeronauts in the car a considerable amount of lifting power. A school was started to instruct sailors as to how to manage balloons. The plan adopted was somewhat peculiar. From the roof of a railway-station was slung a car. A sailor climbed into it. A string was suspended above him. This he was informed was his valve line. If he pulled it while in a balloon he was told that he would descend. He was also informed that if he threw out sand he

would rise. This sort of instruction it is needless to say was an utter farce. It might as well have been given the sailor on the ground ; and in my opinion, and in spite of what has been often said by aeronauts to the contrary, it is not a difficult task to learn how to manage a balloon, provided always that the man who directs the aerostat is calm and does not lose his head while in difficulties. It is a trying moment, for instance, if the grapnel does not lay hold of anything as you descend, and the wind is blowing at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour. The grapnel drags along the ground, and the car of the balloon remains at an altitude of about 100 feet. It oscillates violently. You have exhausted your ballast. A hill is passed, and in the valley below you see a line of telegraph. Your grapnel is dragging straight towards it. In another instant

the flukes will be entangled with the wires. You would be liable to very heavy pecuniary damages if you break them and interrupt communication. At the same moment trains are approaching the spot when your balloon would be on the rails should your grapnel catch the telegraph. You have no time for reflection. You must act immediately, and wise you are in your generation if, taking out your knife, you cut the grapnel rope, and trust to providence and the chapter of accidents to eventually arrest the balloon. You clear the telegraph wires, and then must calmly take the bumping that awaits you. The car strikes walls, houses, and other obstacles. All this time the aeronaut is busily engaged letting out gas. He does this by means of his valve line with one hand ; he endeavours to protect himself from the effect of the

various collisions with the other. Fortunate is he if, finally, the balloon dashes into a wood, and the branches of the trees tearing the silk, let out the gas quicker than it could escape through the valve.

His sufferings are then over. He can leave his car, and after packing up the balloon, console himself with the idea that things might have been worse after all.

During the siege of Paris some very remarkable journeys were made by aeronauts carrying the post and other important despatches. On one occasion an engineer and a franc-tireur started from the city in winter, with the object, if possible, of effecting a descent near Tours. They rapidly rose far beyond the reach of hostile missiles, and from a great altitude looked down upon the Prussian camp in safety. Then a heavy

mist surrounded them. They lost their reckoning. A sound as of many trains passing reached their ears. This noise did not come from locomotives; it was the roar of the waves breaking against the rocks and coast. They were enveloped in a thick fog, and over the sea. As the gloom cleared away, they could make out a French vessel. They signalled to her. No attention was paid to their movements. They wished to do what Mr. Simmonds and Colonel Brine did the other day—to descend into the water, and take the chance of being picked up by the vessel in question. A German man-of-war now fired at the balloon, but, fortunately for the aeronauts, without effect. Land at last came in sight. As they passed over it, one of the mail-bags was thrown by them from the car. This gave the balloon more rising power, and the

travellers finally descended, after having been fifteen hours in the air, at a place called Mas Lifjeld, in Norway.

Strange ignorance was shown by many writers to the daily Press with reference to the sad accident that occurred to poor Mr. Powell. For several days after the disaster, telegrams were published saying that balloons had been seen in Scotland, in the Channel, and even over Spain, the writers endeavouring to show that the aerostat in question might have belonged to the unfortunate gentleman. Many people were of opinion that a balloon could stay up any time in the air. They were under the impression that the chief difficulty consisted in being able to descend to the ground. Individually I feel convinced that the body of poor Mr. Powell lies within a mile or two from the point where he left the coast.

When the balloon was freed from the weight of his companions, it shot up towards the clouds. The valve had probably been damaged during the time the aerostat was dragging on the ground. The balloon a few minutes afterwards descended into the sea. The wind blew the silk at right angles to the car, a wave entered the neck of the balloon, and the machine became full of water. The unfortunate Member of Parliament was then dragged down with the balloon, his body being entangled in the netting of the car.

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CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

THE reader may now ask—And after all that has been written about balloons, after all the ascents that have been made, has the world benefited by them? and are we one bit nearer the solution of the problem, how to navigate the air, than we were in the last century, in the days of Montgolfier? To this I would reply that so far as aeronautics are concerned we know very little more about the science than our great-grandfathers. Once a man leaves the earth in a balloon he is absolutely at the mercy of the wind. If he has plenty of ballast he can rise and fall. The most he can hope for is if he cannot find a current suitable for him

at one altitude, to discover it at another. He can make observations as to temperature, &c., and bring down some air from a high elevation to be afterwards analyzed by a chemist. To meteorologists he can be very useful, as he can inform them as to the direction of the various winds he meets with during his journey, and may aid in their endeavours to prognosticate changes of the weather. Indeed, so useful would balloons be to meteorologists, that I often wonder that the members of their society do not have a large captive balloon of their own, capable of attaining an altitude of several thousand feet. The observations which they would then be able to make at all hours, as to currents of air, would be of great use in making forecasts as to the weather.

So far, from a civilian point of view, as to what can be done, as to what might

be done by means of aerostats; but now I must approach the question from its military aspect, and then I do not hesitate to say that notwithstanding the ridicule often cast upon aeronauts by writers who look upon people who differ from them in opinion, and who venture to express and act upon their opinion as deserving of censure, that a practical knowledge as to how to be able to construct, fill, and manage a balloon, may at times be of the greatest utility to an officer. If it had not been for balloons the Parisians, during the siege of their town, would have been deprived of all news of the outer world. The beleaguered generals would not have known what their comrades were doing to relieve them; and friends outside Paris would have learnt nothing of what was going on within the walls of the city. When it was a matter of such

great importance to communicate with Bazaine in Metz, this might easily have been effected if the general had thought of sending up an officer in a balloon, and with him a few carrier-pigeons. Indeed, if some years ago I had succeeded in a plan that I had formed to enter Plevna whilst it was blockaded by the Russians, sooner than have been taken by my Muscovite friends I would have made an attempt to give them the slip by means of a journey through the air.

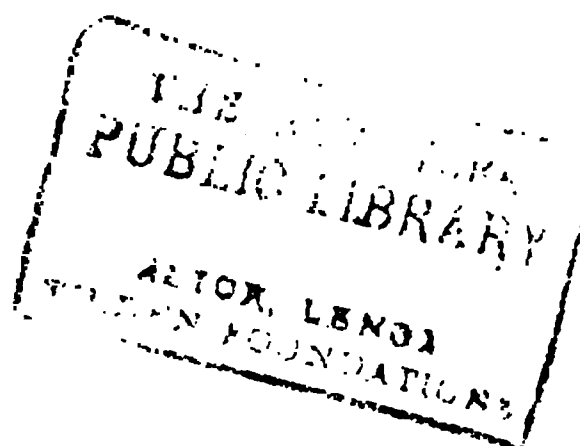
Again for *reconnoissances*, and when besieging a city it is very useful for a general to know what is passing within its walls. This can be easily learnt by sending up a staff-officer in a captive balloon to the required altitude. Balloons were much used by the Americans during the war between North and South ; and a regular balloon corps was formed here already.

By means of the heliograph, sig-

nals could be transmitted immense distances from aerostats anchored in fixed stations, and at suitable altitudes. Lately some experiments have been made at Woolwich with balloons, and as to the easiest manner to inflate them. It is to be hoped that those officers who have been endeavouring to learn enough about the construction and management of aerostats to be able to put their knowledge at the service of their country in the event of war, will not allow themselves to be discouraged by the satire of gentlemen who ridicule what they dare not attempt themselves. It may be said that these experiments at Woolwich cost the country too much money. A few hundred pounds expended in time of peace is not much when you consider that it may be the means of winning a battle or preventing a defeat in time of war. Some men are always satisfied with things as they

find them. They look upon any innovation as a sign of national decadence, and only realize the value of an invention when they find themselves in a country where they are deprived of its use. Stephenson was laughed at. Edison, if he had lived 250 years ago, would have been burnt as a wizard. In spite of the wonders accomplished by science, people who devote themselves to the study of aeronautics are looked upon like men striving to square the circle. But the day will come when we shall navigate the air, although not, in my opinion, by means of balloons. The Aeronautic Society is by no means idle on this great question. Its indefatigable Secretary, Mr. Brearey, and many of the members, not satisfied with attempting to solve the problem by means of balloons, are directing their attention to steam and other motive powers. The child's top, formed like the

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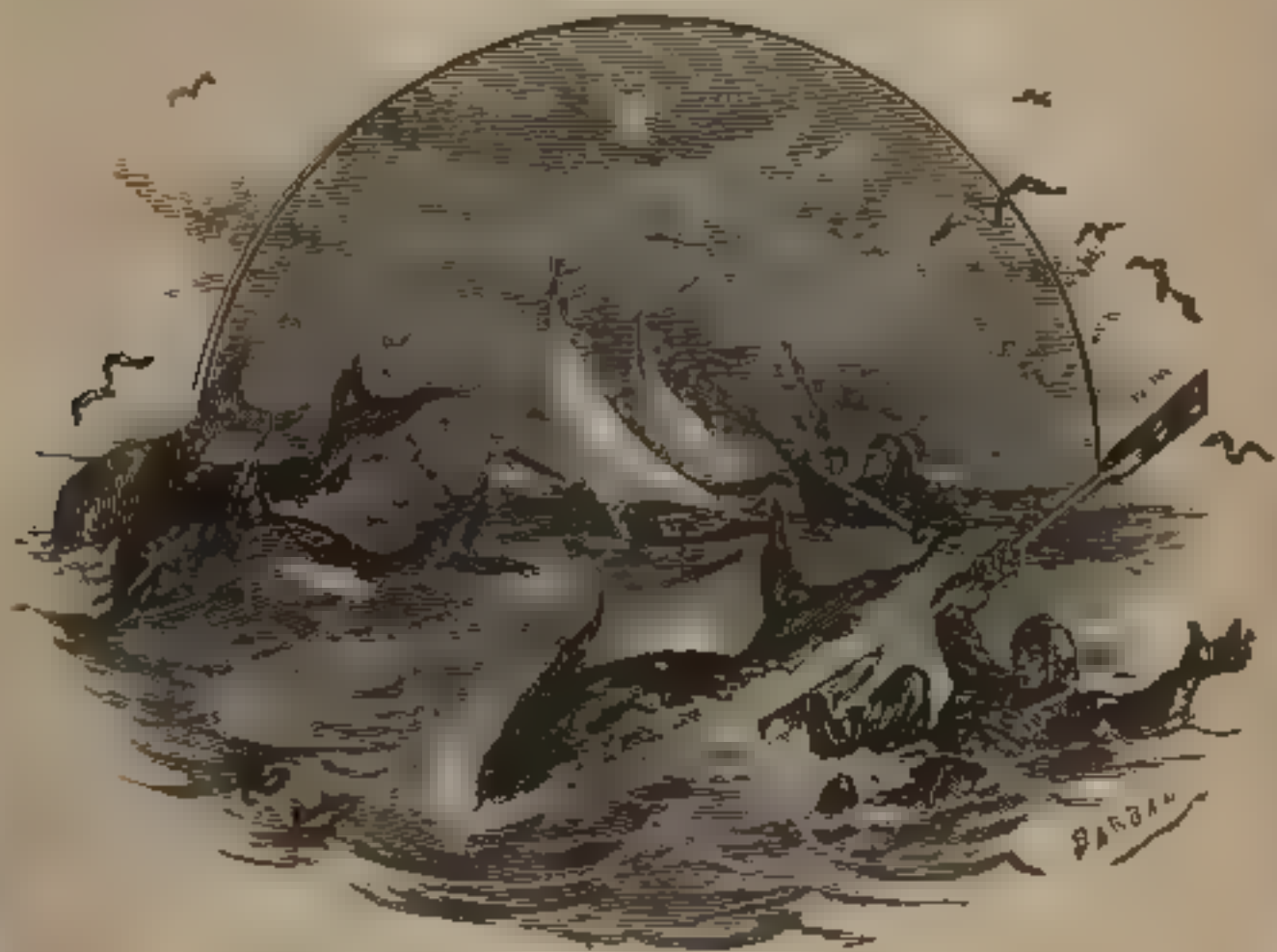


In the course of ten minutes they were able to steer with perfect ease and security (page 217). *Frontispiece.*

THE TRIBULATIONS OF A CHINAMAN.

BY
JULES VERNE.

TRANSLATED BY ELLEN E. FREWER.



AUTHOR'S ILLUSTRATED EDITION.

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THE TRIBULATIONS OF A CHINAMAN

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST WATCH OF THE NIGHT.

"THERE'S some good in life, after all!" exclaimed one of a party of six, as he rested his elbow upon the arm of a marble-backed seat, and nibbled a fragment of lotus-leaf.

"Yes, and evil too," replied another, recovering himself from a fit of coughing brought on by the pungency of a piece of shark's fin.

"Then be philosophers," said a man of more advanced years, who wore a pair of huge spectacles with wide rims; "be philosophers, and take life as it comes; to-day you run the risk of being choked; to-morrow discontent departs as easily as this wine. Such is life!"

And he swallowed a glass of lukewarm wine, drawn from a vessel whence the steam arose in a cloud that was scarcely perceptible.

"For my part," observed a fourth, "I find existence

comfortable as long as there is plenty to live on and nothing to do."

"On the contrary," a fifth remarked, "true happiness consists in labour and study ; to get happiness you must get knowledge."

"And find out at last that you know nothing."

"Well, and isn't that the beginning of wisdom?"

"And what, then, is the end of it?"

"Wisdom has no end," said the gentleman in the spectacles ; "but there will be no want of contentment if only you possess common sense."

"And our host, what has he to say upon the subject? does he hold life to be a condition of good or a condition of evil?" said the first speaker, addressing the entertainer of the party, who occupied, as of right, the seat at the head of the table.

The host had been sitting silent and abstracted, carelessly biting some melon-pips, and taking no part in the discussion. Appealed to thus directly, he merely pouted and uttered a contemptuous "Pooh!"

Common to all languages, "pooh" is a little monosyllable that may convey a large amount of meaning. It was now the signal for a general outburst of argument between the five guests ; each more decidedly advanced his own theory, whilst all were unanimous in wishing to elicit their host's opinion on the matter.

For some time he declined to make any further reply ; but at length admitted that as far as he was concerned he found life neither particularly pleasant nor particularly unpleasant ; that he looked upon it as rather an insignificant institution, and that he hardly thought any very intense enjoyment was to be got out of it.

A perfect volley of surprise broke from the whole audience.

“Only hear him !” cried one.

“Listen to him, a man that had never a rose-leaf to disturb his ease !” cried another.

“And so young too !”

“Yes, young and healthy !”

“And rich to boot !”

“Ay, rich enough !”

“Perhaps a little too rich !”

Animated as this cross-fire was, it failed to call up the faintest semblance of a smile upon the impassive countenance of the host ; he only shrugged his shoulders with the air of a man who had scarcely glanced at the book of his experience, and who certainly was in no hurry to turn over its pages.

He was thirty-one years of age, in the possession of perfect health and an ample fortune : his mind had suffered from no lack of culture, and in general intelligence he was rather above the average. There seemed no reason why he should not be the happiest of mortals.

Presently the grave voice of the philosopher, like the voice of the leader of an ancient chorus, was heard above the tumult,—

“Young man, if you are not perfectly happy, it is because your happiness has always been of a negative character. In order to appreciate health and good fortune aright, it is necessary at some time or other to have been deprived of them. Now, you have never been ill; you have never known a misfortune; I repeat, therefore, that you are not capable of enjoying the blessings of which you are in possession.”

He filled a glass with sparkling champagne of a costly brand, and holding it up, continued,—

“My friends, let me propose a toast:—‘May some misfortune light upon our host—some little shadow settle on the brightness of his life!’”

The glasses of the company were drained. The host calmly made the least possible sign of acknowledgment, and relapsed into his normal apathy.

And where, it may now be asked, did this conversation take place? Was it in Paris, London, Vienna, or St. Petersburg? Was it in a restaurant of the Old World or the New that this little company was gathered, eating and drinking, genial yet without excess. One thing was altogether certain: it was not a party of Frenchmen, for not a word of politics had been spoken.

THE FIRST WATCH OF THE NIGHT.

The apartment was moderate in size, but richly decorated. The rays of the setting sun glinted through panes of blue and orange glass; beyond the bay-windows wreaths of flowers, real and artificial, waved in the evening breeze, while variegated lanterns mingled their pale light with the departing beams of day. The tops of the windows were ornamented with carved arabesques and varied sculpture representing the fauna and flora of a fantastic world; hangings of silk and wide double-bevelled mirrors adorned the walls, and suspended from the ceiling a punkah with wings of painted muslin kept the air in motion and relieved the oppressiveness of the temperature.

The table was oblong in shape, and made of black lacquer; its surface, uncovered by any table-cloth, reflected each separate article of porcelain or of silver as perfectly as if it had been a sheet of crystal.

As a substitute for table-napkins, every one was supplied with a considerable number of squares of paper figured over in various devices. The chairs arranged round the table were made with marble backs, as being more suitable to the climate than the padded lounges in general use elsewhere.

Comely girls did the waiting; they wore lilies and chrysanthemums in their raven locks, and had bracelets of gold and jade coquettishly twisted on their arms. Sprightly and full of smiles, they dexterously took the dishes on and

off with one hand, leaving the other free to wave a graceful fan, in order to maintain the current of air that had been set in motion by the punkah above.

Nothing could be more perfect or served in better style than the entire banquet. The Bignon of the district, as if aware that he was catering for connoisseurs, seemed to have been anxious to surpass himself in the preparation of the many dishes that crowded the *menu*.

For the first course were handed sugared cakes, caviare, fried grasshoppers, dried fruits, and Ning-Po oysters. Then followed successively, at short intervals, ducks', pigeons', and peewits' eggs poached, swallows' nests with mashed eggs, fricassees of ginseng, stewed sturgeons' gills, whales' sinews with sweet sauce, fresh-water tadpoles, fried crabs' spawn, sparrows' gizzards, sheeps' eyes stuffed with garlic, radishes in milk flavoured with apricot-kernels, matelotes of holithurias, bamboo-sprouts in syrup, and sweet salads. The last course consisted of pine-apples from Singapore, earth-nuts, salted almonds, savoury mangoes, the white fleshy fruits of the "long-yen," the pulpy fruits of the "lit-chee," chestnuts, and preserved oranges from Canton. For drinks, there were beer, wine from Chao-Chigne, and an ample supply of champagne. After the dessert, rice was served, which the guests raised to their mouths with little chop-sticks.

Three hours were spent over the banquet. When it was

ended, and at the time when, according to European usage, salvers of rose-water are frequently handed round, the waiting-maids brought napkins steeped in warm water, which all the company rubbed over their faces apparently with great satisfaction.

The next stage of the entertainment was an hour's lounge to be occupied in listening to music. A group of players and singers entered, all pretty young girls, neatly and modestly attired. Their performance, however, could scarcely have been more inharmonious; it was hardly better than a series of yells, howls, and screeches, without rhythm and without time. The instruments were a worthy accompaniment to the chorus; wretched violins, of which the strings kept entangling the bows; harsh guitars covered with snake-skins; shrill clarionets, and harmonicons all out of tune, like diminutive portable pianos.

The girls had been conducted into the room by a man who acted as leader of the Charivari. Having handed a programme to the host, and received in return a permission to perform what he chose, he made his orchestra strike up "The bouquet of ten flowers," a piece at that time enjoying a vast popularity in the fashionable world. This was followed by other pieces of similar character, and at the close of the performances, the troop, already handsomely paid, were enthusiastically applauded, and allowed to depart and gain fresh laurels from other audiences.

After the concert was over, the party rose from their seats, and, having interchanged a few ceremonious sentences, passed to another table. Here were laid six covered cups, each embossed with a portrait of Bôdhidharama, the celebrated Buddhist monk, standing on his legendary wheel. The cups were already full of boiling water, and each member of the party was provided with a pinch of tea, which he put into the cup, without sugar, and at once drank off the infusion. And what tea it was! Direct from the stores of Gibb, Gibb, and Co., there was no fear of its having been adulterated by extraneous matter, nor of its being coloured by turmeric or Prussian blue; no suspicion of its having already been subject to a process of decoction that left it only fit to lay upon the carpet of a dusty room; it was the Imperial tea, in all its purity, the young leaf-buds allowed to be gathered only by children with gloves on their hands, and that but rarely, as every gathering kills a tree.

Europeans would have exclaimed in wonder at its flavour, but these connoisseurs sipped it slowly, with the air of men who duly appreciated its quality. They were all men of the upper class, handsomely attired in "hun-chaols," a kind of thin shirt, "ma-cooals," or short tunics, and "haols," long coats buttoned at the side. On their feet were yellow slippers and open-work socks, met by silk breeches that were fastened round the waist by tasselled

scarves; on their chests they wore a kind of stomachers elaborately embroidered in silk. Elegant fans dangled from their girdles.

To this description it must be superfluous to add that they were natives of the land where the tea-tree annually yields its fragrant harvest. To them the banquet, with its strange *menu* of swallows' nests, sharks' fins, and whale-sinew, had contained no novelty, much as they had been aware of the skill and delicacy with which everything had been served. But if there had been nothing to surprise them in the dishes of the entertainment, it was altogether the reverse when their host informed them that he had a communication that he wished to make.

The cups were all refilled, and, raising his own towards his lips, resting his elbow on the table, and fixing his eyes on vacancy, the host began to speak.

"Do not laugh at me, my friends, but I am going to introduce a new element into my life. Whether it will be for good or for evil, only the future can decide. This dinner, at which you give me the pleasure of your company, will be the last in which I shall entertain you as a bachelor. In another fortnight I shall be married!"

"Married and happy! the happiest of men!" broke in the voice of the one who seemed to be the optimist of the party. "See," he added, "the omens are all in your favour," and he pointed out how the lamps were shedding

a clear pale light, how the magpies were chattering cheerily on the carved windows, and how the tea-leaves were all floating perpendicularly in the cups.

A volley of congratulations followed, but the host received them all with the most imperturbable coolness. It did not seem to occur to him that it was necessary to give the name of the lady, and no one ventured to intrude upon his reserve. The philosophic gentleman alone did not join in the general chorus of good wishes, but, sitting with his arms folded, his eyes half closed, and an ironical smile upon his lip, seemed as if he had some misgiving as to the propriety of the compliments that were being so freely paid.

The host looked at him; rising from his seat and approaching him, he said, with a voice that betrayed more emotion than his previous manner indicated,—

“Do you think I am too old to get married?”

“No.”

“Too young, then?”

“No.”

“Am I making a mistake?”

“Very probably.”

“The lady, you know, possesses every quality to make me happy.”

“Very true”

“Then where is the difficulty?”

“The difficulty is in yourself.”

“ Shall I never be happy ? ”

“ Never till you have known what it is to be unhappy.”

“ I am out of the reach of misfortune.”

“ Then your case has no remedy.”

“ Nonsense ! all nonsense ! ” broke in the youngest man in the room ; “ it is all idle trash listening to a theoretical machine like this philosopher ! He is full of theories, and his theories are bosh ! Get married, my friend ; get married as soon as you can. I should get married myself, only I have a vow which forbids me. We will drink your health. Happiness and good luck be with you ! ”

“ I can only repeat my hope,” rejoined the stoic, “ that happiness may come to him through some unhappiness.”

The toast was drunk ; the guests rose from their seats, clenched their fists as if they were about to begin a boxing-match, lifted them to their foreheads, bowed, and took their leave.

From the description thus given of the apartment where the entertainment was held, of the strange *menu*, and of the attire and deportment of the company, it will be at once comprehended that the Chinese here depicted were not of that conventional type which might step out from paper screens or from old oriental porcelain, but, on the other hand, were examples of the modern inhabitants of the Celestial Empire, who, by education, travel, and intercourse with Europeans, have adopted not a few of the

habits of the civilized West. It was, in fact, in the saloon of one of the pleasure-yachts on the Pearl River at Canton that the wealthy Kin-Fo, with his inseparable companion, Wang the philosopher, had just been entertaining four of the earliest friends of his youth, Pao-shen, a mandarin of the fourth class, as his dark blue ball denoted, Yin-Pang, a rich silk merchant in Apothecary Street, Tim, a mere man of pleasure, and Hooal, a man of letters.

Thus, on the twenty-seventh day of the fourth moon, had been passed the first of the five watches into which the Chinese romantically divide the night.

CHAPTER II.

ANTECEDENTS.

KIN-FO had a special reason for giving a farewell dinner at Canton. Having spent the greater part of his youth in the capital of Quang-Tung, he had, as a rich and generous young man, formed many friends there, and was anxious to pay them a compliment on this occasion. But nearly all of them had been dispersed on their various paths of life, and only the four already mentioned remained to accept the courteous invitation. Kin-Fo's proper residence was at Shang-Hai ; he had merely come to Canton for a few days' change of air and scene, and was about, that very evening, to take the steamboat that called at the principal ports along the coasts, and to return to his "yamen."

As a matter of course, Wang the philosopher had accompanied him ; he was a tutor who rarely quitted his pupil's side. Tim had not been very much beside the mark when he irreverently called him "a theoretical machine," for he

was never weary of propounding his sententious maxims, although it must be owned that they ordinarily had as little effect upon Kin-Fo as is proverbially represented by water on a duck's back.

Kin-Fo was a very fair type of the Chinese of the North, who have never become allied with the Tartars. Neither his father's family nor his mother's had a drop of Tartar blood in their veins, and for purity of breed his match could not be found anywhere in the southern provinces, where both upper and lower classes have intermingled with the Manchow race. He was tall and well-built; his complexion was fair rather than yellow; his eyes and eyebrows were set almost horizontally, although they turned up slightly towards the temples; his nose was straight, and altogether his physiognomy was so refined that he could hardly have passed unnoticed even among the handsome men of the well-favoured populations of the west. The Chinese characteristic that was most pronounced was his closely shorn head and neck, with the magnificent pigtail that descended from his poll like a serpent of glossy jet. A fine moustache grew in a graceful semicircle over his upper lip, distinct as the sign that in musical notation denotes a pause. His nails were allowed to grow to the length of half an inch, delivering their testimony to the fact that he belonged to the class who never put their hands to manual labour of any kind; but any how his

personal bearing was sufficient to show his independent position in life.

He had been born in Peking, a birthplace in the north of which the Chinese are ever proud, and to which they refer by describing themselves as coming "from above." Here he had lived until he was six years old, when his residence had been changed to Shang-Hai.

His father, Chung-How, was a descendant of a good family in the north, and, like many of his countrymen, possessed a remarkable faculty for business. In the early part of his career there was hardly a product of that rich and populous territory that did not enter into his line of traffic, and paper from Swatow, silk from Soo-Choo, candied sugar from Formosa, tea from Han-Kow and Foo-Chow, iron from Honan, copper and brass from the province of Yunnan—all were included in the items of his commerce. His principal factory, or "kong," was at Shang-Hai, but he had other establishments at Nan-King, Tien-Tsin, Macao, and Hong-Kong. English steamers transported his merchandise, the electric cable kept him informed of the market price of silk at Lyons and of opium at Calcutta; for, unlike the generality of Chinese dealers who were under the pressure of the government or the influence of mandarins, he rose superior to prejudice, and so far from scorning the aid of steam and electricity, he welcomed them readily as efficient agents of progress.

the first of the year, the weather was very cold, and the ground was covered with snow. The temperature was below zero, and the wind was blowing from the north. The snow was very deep, and it was difficult to walk through it. The people were wearing heavy coats and hats, and they were carrying umbrellas. The children were playing in the snow, and they were building snow forts. The dogs were running and playing in the snow. The birds were flying in the sky, and they were singing. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter. The children were playing for hours, and they were having a great time. The dogs were running and playing, and they were very happy. The birds were flying and singing, and they were very happy. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter.

The second of the year, the weather was very cold, and the ground was covered with snow. The temperature was below zero, and the wind was blowing from the north. The snow was very deep, and it was difficult to walk through it. The people were wearing heavy coats and hats, and they were carrying umbrellas. The children were playing in the snow, and they were building snow forts. The dogs were running and playing in the snow. The birds were flying in the sky, and they were singing. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter. The children were playing for hours, and they were having a great time. The dogs were running and playing, and they were very happy. The birds were flying and singing, and they were very happy. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter.

The third of the year, the weather was very cold, and the ground was covered with snow. The temperature was below zero, and the wind was blowing from the north. The snow was very deep, and it was difficult to walk through it. The people were wearing heavy coats and hats, and they were carrying umbrellas. The children were playing in the snow, and they were building snow forts. The dogs were running and playing in the snow. The birds were flying in the sky, and they were singing. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter. The children were playing for hours, and they were having a great time. The dogs were running and playing, and they were very happy. The birds were flying and singing, and they were very happy. The trees were covered with snow, and they were very beautiful. The houses were covered with snow, and they were very warm. The streets were covered with snow, and they were very clean. The people were very happy, and they were enjoying the winter.

ANTECEDENTS.

forth; and so violent was the flood that Congress was driven to take measures to restrict what was somewhat uncourteously designated as the invasion of the "yellow plague;" it was soon discovered that although the exodus of 50,000,000 emigrants would not very sensibly affect the Chinese Empire, the settlement of so large a contingent of Mongolians upon American soil threatened only too seriously to result in the absorption of the Anglo-Saxon element in the community.

Nevertheless, in defiance of all effort to establish restrictions, emigration continued to go on. The coolies, handy at all trades, and contented with a handful of rice, a cup of tea, and a little tobacco for their daily rations, did thoroughly well in California, Oregon, Virginia, and at Salt Lake, bringing with them everywhere a very considerable reduction in the wages of handicraft. Companies were started for their transport; five in various parts of China for their conveyance to America, and another at San Francisco to receive them on their arrival. A subordinate agency was likewise established, called Ting-Tong, which undertook to bring them back again.

The necessity for this Ting-Tong was imperative. Although the Chinese were ready enough to go and seek their fortune among the "Mellicans," as they called the people of the United States, it was always upon the rigid condition that die when they might, their bodies should

not fail to be brought back and buried in their native land. Except under a special covenant to this effect, no contract could ever be made between an emigrant and a company; and this "Death-agency" accordingly was set on foot to provide the means of conveyance for corpses from California to Shang-Hai, Hong-Kong or Tien-Tsin.

Among the first to foresee the lucrative character of this new branch of business was the enterprising Chung-How. He entered upon it with great zest, and when he died, in 1866, he was a director of the Quang-Tung Company in the province of that name, besides being sub-director of the Ting-Tong board at San Francisco.

So successful were Chung-How's speculations, that Kin-Fo at his father's death found himself heir to a fortune of 160,000/., nearly all invested in the Central Bank of California, where he had the good sense to leave it. Only nineteen years of age, without father and without mother, he would have been alone in the world had it not been for the society of his inseparable friend and mentor, Wang. For seventeen years had Wang resided in the yamen at Shang-Hai, the cherished companion alike of father and son; whither he had come and what were his antecedents probably none but Chung-How and Kin-Fo could tell, and even they would doubtless maintain a strict reserve upon the subject. It may, however, be well slightly to lift the veil and just glance at his early history.

It is a recognized certainty that in China the spirit roused by an insurrection will live and linger for many years in the hearts of many thousand men. In the seventeenth century, the celebrated Ming dynasty of Chinese origin had exercised its sway for three hundred years, when, in 1644, the representative of the race, finding himself too weak to cope with the enemies that threatened his capital, called in the aid of a Tartar king. The Tartars, nothing loth, hastened to his assistance, subdued the insurrection, but immediately took advantage of his position to dethrone the suppliant, and caused his own son Chun-chee to be proclaimed Emperor of China.

Henceforward, the usurper held the power, and the Chinese throne was filled by Manchow Emperors. Little by little, amongst the lower classes of the population, the two races amalgamated, but amongst the richer families of the north the distinction between Chinese and Tartars was far more strictly maintained, and in some provinces even to the present day there are to be found those who have remained steadfast in their allegiance to the fallen dynasty.

Amongst these was Kin-Fo's father. Faithful to the traditions of his family, he would at any time have welcomed a revolt against the Tartar power, although for three centuries it had been dominant in the empire. His son, as might be expected, shared his political sentiments.

The reigning emperor in 1860 was Tsien-Fong, who declared war against France and England ; a war which was concluded by the treaty of Peking on the 25th of October, in the same year. But previously to that date the ruling dynasty had been threatened by a formidable insurrection. The Chang-Mow or Tai-Ping, the "long-haired-rebels," had captured Nanking in 1853, and two years afterwards had taken Shang-Hai. After Tsien-Fong's death, his young son and successor had a hard matter to hold his own against the Tai-Ping, and except for the assistance of the Viceroy Li, Prince Kong, and more especially of the English Colonel Gordon, the chances are very great that he would not have retained his throne. The object of the Tai-Ping, sworn enemies to the Tartars, was to overthrow the reigning Tsing dynasty, and to replace it once more by that of Ming ; their party was strongly organized, divided into four distinct bands ; the first, under a black banner commissioned for slaughter ; the second, under a red banner, set apart for incendiarism ; the third, under a yellow banner, appointed for plunder ; and the fourth, under a white banner, selected to superintend the commissariat of the other three.

Important military operations were carried on in the province of Kiang-Su. Soo-Choo and Kia-Hing, a few miles from Shang-Hai, fell into the hands of the insurgents, and were recaptured only after a severe struggle.

by the Imperial troops. Shang-Hai itself was attacked on the 18th of August, 1860, at the very time when, further north, the united French and English army, under Generals Grant and Montauban respectively, was storming the forts of the Pei-Ho river. Chung-How was then occupying a residence near Shang-Hai, close to the magnificent bridge that had been constructed by Chinese engineers, over the river of Soo-Chow, and, as may be supposed, was watching the insurrection with no unfavourable eye.

On the evening of the 18th, just after the rebels had been expelled from the town, the door of the merchant's house was suddenly burst open, and a fugitive flung himself at the master's feet. He was entirely unarmed, and if Chung-How had been inclined to surrender him to the Imperial troops, his life would have been forfeited at once. But Chung-How had no disposition to betray a Tai-Ping; he hastily closed the door and addressed the intruder,—

“I know nothing of you. I do not inquire whence you have come, or what you have been doing. Here you may consider yourself as my guest. Here you shall be safe.”

Well-nigh exhausted as he was, the fugitive in broken sentences, began to pour forth his gratitude, but Chung-How checked him by asking,—

“What is your name?”

“Wang!” was the answer.

“Enough! enough!” said Chung-How; “I ask no more.”

Thus Wang's life was saved by an act which, had it been known, would doubtless have cost the blood of the benefactor.

In the course of the next few years, the rebellion was finally suppressed, and in 1864, the Tai-Ping Emperor, besieged in Nanking, poisoned himself, to avoid falling into the hands of the Imperialists.

From the hour of his rescue, Wang had remained under his deliverer's roof, no one ever venturing to question him about his past deeds. The atrocities committed by the rebels were said to have been very terrible, and perhaps it was better to be ignorant as to which of the four banners Wang had followed, or at least to cherish the belief that he had only served in the corps that provided for the victualling of the others.

But whatever the fact might be, it was anyhow certain that Wang had been fortunate enough to find most comfortable quarters, and had done his best to repay the generosity that had rescued him. So wise and so amiable a friend had he shown himself, that Kin-Fo, upon his father's death, had retained him as an inseparable companion for himself. In the staid moralist of fifty-five, the philosopher in wooden spectacles, with the conventional moustache, it would have been hard to recognize the Tai-Ping of former days, given perhaps to robbery, to incendiarism, or to murder; with his long sober-coloured robe,

with his figure slightly tending to *embonpoint*, and with his professional skull-cap of fur decorated, according to Imperial regulation, with tufts of red, he might easily have passed for a member of the confraternity versed in the eighty thousand symbols of the Chinese caligraphy, or for one of the first-class literates privileged to pass beneath the great gate of Peking reserved exclusively for "the sons of heaven." It is very likely that the rough nature of the rebel had been softened down by perpetual contact with Chung-How's frank and genial qualities, and that he had gradually subsided into the calm and gentle ways of speculative philosophy.

On the evening on which this story opens, and immediately after the farewell dinner was over, Kin-Fo and Wang together proceeded towards the quay to meet the steamer that was to convey them back to Shang-Hai. Kin-Fo was silent and thoughtful; Wang looked up and down, right and left; now at the moon, now at the stars, passing complacently through the gate of Perpetual Purity, with equal composure through the gate of Perpetual Joy, and underneath the shadow of the Pagoda of the Five Hundred Gods.

The "Perma" was just getting up her steam. Kin-Fo and Wang went to the cabins that reserved for them, and were soon traversing the Pearl River, the rapid stream which daily

carcases of prisoners who have been executed. The steamer shot past the breaches that had been made by the French cannonade, past the Pagoda of Nine Stories and past the Jardyne Point in the neighbourhood of Whampoa, where larger ships are wont to anchor; wending her way between the little islands and the stockaded banks, she made a hundred miles during the night, and at sunrise was passing "the Tiger's Jaw," and nearing the bars at the mouth of the estuary, while through the morning mist the Victoria peak of Hong-Kong, 1825 feet in height, was faintly visible.

The voyage was prosperous all through, and in due time Kin-Fo and his companion were safely landed at Shang-Hai, on the coast of the province of Kiang-Nan.

CHAPTER III.

SHANG-HAI.

THERE is a Chinese proverb to the effect that "when swords are rusty and spades bright, when prisons are empty and granaries full, when temple-steps are worn by the footprints of the faithful, and courts of justice are overgrown with grass, when doctors go on foot, and bakers on horseback, then the Empire is justly governed." However true the proverb may ordinarily be, to no country in the world is it less applicable than to China, for there, on the contrary, swords are bright, while spades are rusty, the prisons are full to overflowing, while the granaries are empty, bakers rather than doctors starve, and though the pagodas may attract the believers, the halls of justice never lack their train of criminals.

An empire which extends over an area of 1,300,000 square miles, which is more than 1400 miles in length, and varies from 900 to 1300 miles in breadth, and which contains eighteen vast provinces, exclusive of the dependent

territories of Mongolia, Manchuria, Thibet, Tonquin, Corea, and the Loo-Choo Islands, can scarcely fail to have a very imperfect administration. The fact is quite evident to foreigners, and the Chinese themselves are beginning to have more than a suspicion of its truth. The emperor alone, "the son of heaven," the father of his people, who rarely emerges from the august seclusion of his palace, whose word is law, whose power over life and death is absolute, to whom the imperial revenues are due by right of birth, and before whom all foreheads are bowed low to the dust—he, indeed, may believe that he rules over the happiest of lands, and any attempt to undeceive him would be utterly vain; a "child of the skies" must be infallible, and can make no mistake.

It would seem, however, that Kin-Fo had come to the conclusion that it was preferable to live under European rather than Chinese authority; he had chosen to reside not in Shang-Hai itself, but in the portion of land that had been assigned to the English, and in which they maintained an independent autonomy.

Shang-Hai proper is situated on the left-hand bank of the little Wang-Poo River, which, meeting the Woosung at right-angles, joins the Yang-tse-Kiang, or Blue River, and ultimately flows into the Yellow Sea. The town is oval in shape, lying north and south, enclosed by high walls, through which five outlets lead to the suburbs. The

narrow dirty streets are little better than paved lanes ; the dingy shops, without fronts or stocks to attract, are served by shopmen often naked to their waists ; not a carriage nor palanquin, and very rarely even a horseman, passes by ; here and there are scattered a few native temples and chapels belonging to foreigners ; the only places of recreation are a "tea-garden," and a swampy parade-ground, the dampness of which is accounted for by its being on the site of former rice-fields. Such are the chief points of a town, which, undesirable as it may seem as a place of residence, yet numbers a population of 200,000, and is of considerable commercial importance.

It was, in fact, the first town, after the treaty of Nanking, that was thrown open to European traffic, and in which foreigners were permitted to form establishments. Outside the town and suburbs, three portions of territory have been granted, subject to an annual rent, to the French, English, and Americans, who have settled there to the number of about two thousand.

Of the French grant of land, or "concession," as being of the least importance, there is little to be said. It lies almost entirely to the north of the town, and extends as far as the small river Yong-King-Pang, which separates it from the English allotment. It contains the churches of the Lazarists and Jesuits, in connexion with which four miles from the town is the College of Tsikavé, where

degrees are granted to the Chinese. The colony, however, is so small that it can bear no comparison with its neighbours; out of the ten houses of business established there in 1861, only three now remain, and even the discount bank has migrated to the English settlement.

The American territory lies nearer the Woo-Sung, and is separated from the English concession by the Soo-Choo Creek, spanned by a wooden bridge. Its chief buildings are the Hotel Astor and the Mission Church. There are also docks of some magnitude to which European as well as American vessels are brought for repairs.

But by far the most flourishing of the three settlements is that appropriated to the English. The handsome residences on the quays with luxurious verandahs and elegantly laid-out gardens, the abodes of merchant princes, the Oriental Bank, the "Kong" belonging to the celebrated house of Dent, the offices of the Jardynes, Russells, and other great firms, the English club, the theatre, the tennis-court, the race-course, the library, all unite to form what has, with no inconsiderable amount of justice, been called "the model colony," and, under a liberal administration as it is, it is not altogether surprising to find what M. Léon Rousset has described as "*une ville chinoise d'un caractère tout particulier et qui n'a d'analogue nulle part d'ailleurs.*"

The foregoing account explains how a stranger approaching this corner of the world by the picturesque route of the

Blue River, would behold four flags floating in the same breeze, the French tricolour, the Union Jack, the American stars and stripes, and the yellow cross on the green ground of the Celestial Empire.

Around Shang-Hai, the environs are flat and void of trees. Narrow stony roads and footpaths intersect each other at right angles; reservoirs and "arroyos" provide the vast rice plantations with water; numberless canals convey the junks right into the middle of the fields, as in Holland. The whole scene may be compared to a drawing of a great green landscape without a frame.

It was getting on towards midday when the "Perma" came alongside the quay of the eastern suburb of the native port. Kin-Fo and Wang landed at once. The bustle and the crowd were indescribable. On the river were junks by hundreds, pleasure-boats, "sampans" resembling gondolas, gigs, and craft of every size, a veritable floating city, the home of a population that cannot be estimated at less than 40,000 souls, all of the lower class, of whom the most fortunate and well-to-do can never hope to rise to the rank of literates or mandarins. The quay, too, was as densely peopled as the water, for there swarmed a motley multitude, merchants of all grades, vendors of oranges, earth-nuts, and shaddocks, seamen of many a nation, water-carriers, fortune-tellers, Buddhist priests, Catholic priests, dressed in Chinese fashion, native soldiers,

"ti-paos," or local police, and "compradores," agents for transacting the negotiations with European merchants.

The two friends sauntered leisurely along the quays. Kin-Fo, fan in hand, in careless indifference, hardly cast a look at the noisy multitude that thronged around. For him, owner as he was of a fortune that would go some way towards buying a good slice of the whole suburbs, the chink of the Mexican piastres, silver taels, and copper sapecks,¹ in their active circulation was a sound that excited no personal interest. Wang had opened his huge yellow umbrella decorated with figures of black monsters, and walked along, suffering very little to escape the keen eye of his observation. As they passed the East Gate, he caught sight of about a dozen bamboo-cages which contained the heads of a lot of criminals who had been executed the day before.

"Better have filled those fellows' heads with knowledge than cut them off," he muttered to himself.

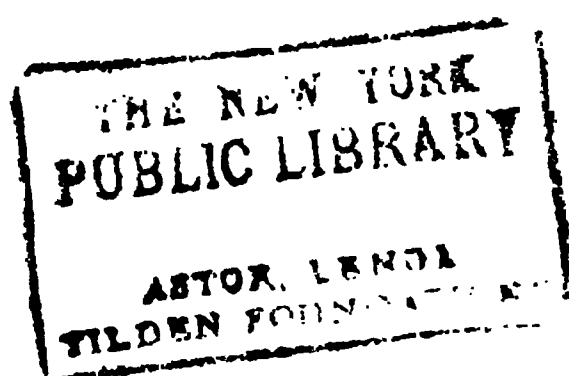
Kin-Fo did not happen to hear the remark, otherwise he might have felt considerable surprise at such a sentiment uttered by one who formerly had been a Tai-Ping.

Leaving the quay, and passing round the walls, they came close upon the French allotment, and had their attention directed to a man dressed in a long blue robe,

¹ The piastre is worth about 4s. 3½d.; the tael about 6s. 7d. The sapeck is only one-twentieth of a penny.



The two friends sauntered leisurely along the quay. Page 30.



who was trying to attract a crowd by beating a hollow buffalo's horn with a stick.

"Ah, look!" cried Wang, "here is a sien-Cheng!"

"Well," said Kin-Fo; "what of that?"

"Oh! it's just the time; you are going to be married; he must tell your fortune!" replied the philosopher.

Kin-Fo had no wish for his fortune to be told, and was conscious of his reluctance; nevertheless, at Wang's suggestion he came to a standstill.

A "sien-Cheng" is a recognized itinerant fortune-teller, who for a few sapecks is ready to reveal all the secrets of the future. His professional appliances are nothing more than a pack of sixty-four cards, and a small bird in a cage which he carries attached to his button-hole: the cards are painted with pictures of gods, men, and beasts. The Chinese generally are very superstitious, but they are particularly prone to respect the prognostications of a sien-Cheng.

At a sign from Wang, the man spread a calico sheet upon the ground, and deposited his bird-cage upon it. He then produced his pack of cards, shuffled them, and dealt them out face downwards upon the sheet. Opening the door of the cage, he retired for the bird to come out. The bird hopped out, picked up a card, and hopped back again. It was rewarded with a grain or two of rice. The card was turned up. It was a picture of a man, and a

motto was written under the picture in "kunan-runa," the official language of the north, which is understood by none except the educated classes. The sien-Cheng took up the card, and formally exhibiting it, began to tell the identical story which is delivered by fortune-tellers all over the world—there should be first one grievous difficulty, and afterwards bliss for ten thousand years.

"Not so bad!" blandly observed Kin-Fo; "one difficulty is not much;" and he flung a tael on the white sheet. The fortune-teller clutched at the silver piece as a hungry dog would clutch at a bone; it was rarely that a guerdon so good fell to his lot.

They recommenced their way, and approached the French colony; the tutor pondering how remarkably the oracle they had just consulted coincided with his own theories, the young man nursing the conviction that no serious difficulty was likely to befall him. They passed the French consulate, crossed the narrow bridge over the Yang-King-Pang, and, entering the British quarter, kept on their way until they reached the chief European quay.

By this time the midday hour had struck, at which a Chinaman's commercial day comes to a close. Quickly the stir of business began to lull, and, as if by magic, the bustle of the English settlement subsided into a still and noiseless calm.

Several ships had just entered the port, the majority of

them carrying the British flag. A proportion of nine out of ten of them were probably freighted with opium, that powerful narcotic with which England supplies China, it is said, at a profit of 300 per cent. and at an advantage to her revenue of nearly 10,000,000*l.* a year. In vain has the Chinese Government expostulated and endeavoured to put a stop to the importation; the war of 1841, and the Treaty of Nanking alike have secured open rights to British traders, and although the Government at Peking has pronounced a penalty of death upon any Chinese subject who directly or indirectly traffics in the drug, ways and means are ever found to evade the enactment and to escape the punishment. It is asserted that the mandarin governor of Shang-Hai annually adds some thousands of pounds to the emoluments of his post, merely by shutting his eyes to the delinquencies of his subordinates.

It is only justice to record that neither Kin-Fo nor Wang ever yielded to the seductions of opium-smoking; not an ounce of the dangerous poison had ever found its way to the interior of the handsome dwelling at which within another hour the young man and his sage counsellor arrived.

"Better teach a nation than stupify them!" Wang would repeatedly say, and ignoring the Tai-ping principles of former days would add—"Commerce is all very well, but philosophy is better!"

CHAPTER IV.

KIN-FO AT HOME.

A YAMEN is a collection of various buildings arranged in parallel lines, and crossed at right angles by a corresponding series. As a general rule, yamens are the property of the emperor, and occupied only by mandarins of high rank, but as they are not absolutely prohibited to men of very large means, Kin-Fo was in possession of one of these luxurious abodes.

He and Wang stopped at the principal entrance of the large enclosure that surrounded the entire structure and comprehended all the gardens and courtyards. If the yamen had been the residence of a mandarin magistrate instead of that of a private person, the carved and painted porch would have been furnished with a huge drum, upon which claimants for justice, by day or by night, might have announced their arrival; in its place, however, were capacious porcelain jars kept constantly replenished by the house-steward with cold tea for the use of passers-by—a

considerate act of generosity which earned for Kin-Fo the good will of all his neighbours.

Upon being apprised of their master's return the whole household came forward to receive him. Valets, footmen, porters, coachmen, grooms, waiters, watchmen, and cooks, were all drawn up under the presidency of the steward, and some ten or twelve coolies, engaged by the month to do the rougher work, were seen hanging about in the background.

The steward stepped forward to give his master welcome, but Kin-Fo passed him with a careless wave of the hand, and only said—

“Where is Soon?”

Wang smiled and remarked—

“Just like him! Soon would not be himself if he were found in his proper place at the proper time.”

Kin-Fo repeated the question.

The steward only said that he could not tell, nor did he suppose any one else could, what had become of Soon.

Soon was Kin-Fo's *valet de chambre*, his own special attendant, with whom no consideration would have induced him to part. Yet Soon was by no means a model servant. On the contrary, he was blundering and awkward, both with his tongue and with his hands; extremely greedy, and, withal, something of a coward; the very type, in fact

of the conventional Chinaman, as depicted upon hand-screens and tea-cups. On the whole, however, he was faithful to his employer, and was especially servicable in one respect, inasmuch as he was the only being who seemed able to arouse him to a condition of activity. A dozen times a day would Kin-Fo work himself into a rage with Soon, the whole benefit of the exertion being lost upon the valet, but having the wholesome effect of occasionally shaking off the master's habitual apathy.

In a way not at all uncommon among Chinese servants, Soon made a practice of coming and presenting himself for chastisement whenever his conscience told him he deserved it, and on these occasions his master never spared him ; a few stripes on the man's back did very little more harm than a few drops of rain ; but the great punishment which Soon dreaded was not a whipping, but one which was invariably visited upon him for any grave offence, the loss of an inch or so of his cherished pigtail.

Nothing could exceed the estimate which a Chinaman puts upon the value of this appendage. To be deprived of it is a disgrace that only terminates with life, and is reserved as a government punishment for criminals. When Soon entered Kin-Fo's service some four years back, he had been proud of a tail that was not much less than four feet in length ; he had committed himself in misdemeanours so often that his tail now hardly exceeded two

feet ; he had only to go on transgressing at the same rate, and very soon he would be absolutely bald.

Followed respectfully by the entire household, Kin-Fo entered, and crossed the garden. The trees for the most part were planted in pots which were themselves elaborate specimens of terra-cotta work, nearly every tree being cut into some grotesque shape or other, generally that of an animal. In the middle of the garden was a lake, liberally stocked with "gouramis" and gold fish, the surface of the water being well-nigh concealed by the foliage and bright red blossoms of the nelumbo, which is the finest of the water lilies of "the land of flowers." A passing salute was made to a hieroglyph, representing some mythical quadruped, which was painted in brilliant colours upon the wall, and in a few minutes the door of the main building was in sight.

It consisted of a ground floor with an upper storey, built upon a terrace approached by marble steps. Bamboo screens were stretched out above and before the windows and doors, with the design of modifying the internal temperature. The roof of the structure was quite flat, and hardly seemed to harmonize with the cmbattled parapets, the variegated tiles, and the enamelled bricks that gave so fantastic a character to the surrounding buildings.

Inside, with the exception of a few rooms ordinarily occupied by Kin-Fo and Wang, the apartments were all

spacious saloons furnished with a number of cabinets with transparent panels, the panels being profusely decorated at one place with carvings of fruit and flowers, at another with sentences of the proverbial wisdom in which the Celestials delight. Seats were everywhere in profusion, the prevailing material being terra-cotta, porcelain, wood, or marble, although the stuffed and softer couches of the west were by no means wanting. Lamps of every design, and lanterns of every hue, were suspended in all directions, all decorated with fringes and tassels as variegated as the equipage of a Spaniard. An article of furniture that seemed indispensable everywhere was the "cha-kis," or little tea-table, to be brought into requisition upon a moment's notice.

Hour after hour might have been spent in examining the many knick-knacks of ivory and mother-of-pearl, the bronzes inlaid with niello, the burners for exhaling perfume, the filagrees of gold and white and emerald green, the vases of prismatic glass, historic with the memories of the dynasty of Ming and Tsing, the still rarer porcelain of the age of Yen, and all the enamels, wonderful in that pink and yellow transparency of which the secret of the production seems now completely lost. Look around, and it must be owned that here indeed is a dwelling of luxury; the West has conspired to assist the East, and together they have wrought a concentration of ease, of beauty, and of magnificence.

Kin-Fo was really a man of liberal, advanced, and progressive views ; he would have been the very last to offer opposition to the introduction of any modern invention, and was the most unlikely of all men to entertain a prejudice against the civilization of the West. Science in any form commended itself to his approval ; no sympathy had he with the barbarians who cut the electric cable, laid down to facilitate the working of the English and American mails ; neither was he a partisan of the antiquated mandarins who refused to permit the submarine cable between Shang-Hai and Hong Kong to be joined to the mainland, insisting upon its being only attached to a boat in the open river. He had, on the other hand, associated himself avowedly with the party that backed up the government in constructing docks and arsenals at Foo-Choo, under the direction of French engineers ; he held shares in the China Steamship Company, that works the service between Tien-Tsin and Shang-Hai ; and, moreover, had money invested in the venture of anticipating the English mail by four days, through the establishment of a line of fast ships from Singapore.

There was hardly a modern scientific appliance that had not been adopted in his house ; he had a telephone that placed him in communication with every department of the yamen ; he had electric bells fitted to every chamber ; during the winter he had fires which gave a genial warmth ;

whilst nearly all his countrymen were shivering in blankets over their empty grates; he burned gas, like the Inspector of Customs at Peking, seeing no reason why he should be outdone by Yang, the leading pawnbroker of the empire; and finally, he had ignored the ordinary habit of writing by hand, and for his private correspondence, had purchased one of the phonographs recently brought to great perfection by Edison.

In spite of everything, however, and although he seemed to have all the resources which mortal man could ask for enjoyment, Wang's pupil had not acquired the philosophy which made him truly happy; Soon's vagaries every now and then might serve to awaken him from the drowsiness of apathy; but manifestly there was a missing element in the conditions of genuine felicity.

He entered the vestibule, the spacious hall that opens into the other chambers, but still the expected valet did not make his appearance. The conjecture was only too easy to make: Soon had evidently been guilty of some misdemeanour, and was in no hurry to show himself; he was keeping away to the last possible moment, aware that to come into his master's presence was to put his precious pigtail into new peril.

Kin-Fo was impatient, and shouted—

"Soon! Soon!"

Wang took up the cry, and called,—

"Soon!"

But the valet, if he were within hearing, was not to be moved.

"He is quite incorrigible," said Wang; "no precepts of philosophy do him any good."

Kin-Fo stamped his foot and summoned the steward.

"Find Soon, and send him to me!"

The whole household was set in motion; the missing valet had to be hunted out.

Finding himself and Kin-Fo alone, Wang took the opportunity of saying,—

"The voice of wisdom admonishes the weary traveller that he should take repose."

"Yes; we may do worse than listen to the voice of wisdom," Kin-Fo replied.

Accordingly, each retired to his own apartment.

Flinging himself upon a luxurious couch, a piece of furniture of European make, which no Chinese upholsterer could have imagined, Kin-Fo began to muse. Where else should his thoughts so naturally turn, as to the beautiful and accomplished lady he was about to make his own for life? Her home was at Peking. There Kin-Fo was about to join her. He debated with himself whether or no he should apprise her of his intended visit. It would, he thought, undoubtedly be well to express some impatience to see her again, and certainly he regarded her with sincere

affection. Wang had adduced many logical proofs that there was no mistake about the matter, and might it not really be that the step he was about to take, would really introduce the elements of happiness which hitherto his experience had somehow missed?

He mused on; he closed his eyes; his ponderings became indistinct; he was all but falling asleep, when he felt a sudden tickling in his right hand; instinctively he closed his fingers, and grasped a knotted cane. He knew at once what had happened. The bamboo-rod had been slipped into his hand by his valet, who crouched by his side and meekly said,—

“When master pleases!”

Kin-Fo started up and brandished the cane. Soon crouched down to the carpet. Supporting himself with his left hand, he held up a letter in his right,—

“For you,” he said, “this is for you.”

“Rascal, where have you been?” cried Kin-Fo.

“Ai ai ja,” groaned Soon; “I did not expect you till the third watch. Beat me! beat me; I am ready, when master pleases.”

The valet’s face turned several degrees paler as his master flung the cane angrily on the ground.

“Tell me,” exclaimed Kin-Fo, “why is it you expect a beating? what have you done? tell me at once!”

“This letter,” gasped Soon.

"Well, what about that letter?" shouted Kin-Fo, and he snatched it from his hand.

"I forgot it; I forgot to give it you before you went to Canton."

"A week ago, you vagabond; come here."

"I am a crab without claws," piteously bewailed Soon.

"Come here!" shrieked his master.

"Ai ai ja!" moaned the servant.

This "ai ai ja," was a wail of despair. Already Kin-Fo had seized the unfortunate valet by his pigtail, and in an instant had caught up a pair of scissors, and snipped off its tip.

The crab soon found its claws again, and after scrupulously picking up every morsel of the hair that was lying on the carpet, made his escape from the room. Twenty-three inches before, the tail was only twenty-two now.

Kin-Fo threw himself back upon the couch. He was calm enough, when Soon was gone. It had been only his valet's negligence that had irritated him; he thought nothing about the letter. Why should a letter give him any concern?

He dozed again, and opening his eyes gazed abstractedly upon the envelope he held in his hand. It was unusually thick, the postage stamps were purple and chocolate, of the value of two and six cents respectively; plainly it had come from the United States.

"Ah, yes: from my correspondent at San Francisco and he threw the letter to the far end of the sofa.

"May be the Central Bank shares in California gone up twenty per cent.; the dividends this year improved; these things do not matter much to me." though the current of his thoughts ran in this casual way, his hand after a few minutes instinctively held upon the letter again, and he opened it. He glanced at the signature.

"Just so," he muttered; "as I supposed; from American agent; to-morrow will be time enough to attend to that."

He was on the point of flinging the letter aside for a second time, when the word "liability" caught his eye. It was written large and underlined at the top of the second page. His curiosity was unusually aroused, and he perused the entire document. For a moment, as he read on, his eyebrows contracted, but before he had finished a contemptuous smile curled round his lips.

Rising from his seat he moved a few steps to an acetabulum tube that communicated with Wang's apartment, he put his lips to the mouthpiece, but suddenly altered his mind and went back to lie down again.

"Pooh!" he said, with his usual characteristic expression.

Presently he murmured to himself,—

“To me it is nothing, but to her! to her it is a matter of much greater concern.”

He rose again, and going to a little lacquered table on which stood an oblong box richly carved, was about to open it; but he paused, and said to himself,—

“What did she say in her last letter?”

Instead of raising the lid of the box, he touched a spring at its side, and immediately the soft accents of a female voice were heard.

“My beloved elder brother! Am I not better to you than the Mei-hooa flower in the first moon? Am I not sweeter to you than the apricot bloom of the second moon, or the peach bloom of the third? Ten thousand greetings to my beloved!”

“Poor little thing!” sighed Kin-Fo, as he opened the box, and removed the sheet of tinfoil covered with a series of indented dots that it contained, and replaced it by another.

The tender message had been conveyed by the phonograph, then recently discovered.

Kin-Fo then applied his own lips to the mysterious machine. For a few seconds she continued to speak with clear and distinct utterance, betraying in its equanimity no sign either of joy or sorrow. He had only a few sentences to say. He stopped the action of the instrument, removed the tinfoil on which the needle within had left its marks,

placed the document safely in an envelope, sealed it, and writing from right to left, directed it to

Madam La-oo,

Cha-Cooa Avenue,

Peking.

In answer to an electric bell a messenger promptly appeared, and the letter forthwith was despatched to the post.

An hour later and Kin-Foo had again sought repose. He had rested his arms upon his "Choo-foo-jen," a pillow contrived for coolness out of plaited bamboo, and very soon was fast asleep.

CHAPTER V.

UNWELCOME TIDINGS.

‘Is there no letter for me yet, old mother?’

“No, madam, not yet.”

The same question had been asked and the same answer had been given at least ten times that day in the boudoir of a house in the Cha-Cooa Avenue, Peking, where the beautiful La-oo was sitting with her crabby attendant, old Nan, who, according to Chinese custom with ancient domestics, was ordinarily addressed as “old mother.”

La-oo had been married at eighteen to a man twice her own age, a literate of the first grade, engaged on the compilation of the famous Se-Ko-Tswan-Choo.¹ He died three years after his marriage, leaving his fascinating wife a widow alone in the world.

Not long afterwards Kin-Fo happened to be paying a visit to Peking. Wang, who knew the young widow well,

¹ This work, commenced in 1773 is to comprise 160,000 articles, of which only 78,738 have as yet appeared.

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writing from right to left, directed

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In answer to an electric bell
appeared, and the letter forthwith
post.

An hour later and Kin-Foo
He had rested his arms upon
contrived for coolness out of
soon was fast asleep.

to Yen-Tchiang, who had disfigured herself still
 verely. La-oo, however, thought that she could
 sense with this widow's privilege, and was quite
 to lead the life of submission which the rule of
 try demanded, was ready to renounce all conver-
 rich did not concern the trivial affairs of domestic
 professed herself content to conform to the code
 -num, which treats of the duties of home, and to
 at to the precepts of Nei-tse-pian, which enforces
 tions of the marriage vow. Meanwhile she was
 re that she should enjoy the consideration always
 a wife, who, amongst the upper classes, is by
 the slave which not unfrequently she is supposed

husband, at his decease, had left her not in
 yet in easy circumstances. Her establishment
 cooa Avenue was very modest, old Nan being
 vant. The mistress was quite accustomed to
 contradictory habits, which are by no means

domestics in Chinese households.

partment of the young widow was her
 ure of which had been of the simplest
 on the months, during which
 iving from Shang-
 me picture, that
 chef-d'œuvre of

the old painter, Wan-Tse-Nen,¹ which could not fail at once to attract the eye of a connoisseur as it hung, in contrast every way to the water-colours of modern Chinese artists, glaring with their striking anomalies of green horses, violet dogs, and bright blue trees. On a lacquered table, outspread like the wings of giant butterflies, were several fans from the great school of art at Swatow; around a hanging vase of porcelain was grouped an elegant festoon of artificial flowers, so exquisitely manufactured from the pith of the *Arabia papyrifera*, that only by close inspection could they be distinguished from the real nenuphars, chrysanthemums, and lilies of Japan, these were tastefully arranged in carved wood-work stands in various parts of the room; at the windows were hung blinds of plaited bamboo, which by a process of sifting

¹ The renown of the great masters is handed down to us in traditions that are not unworthy of credit. An anecdote is told of a painter of the third century, named Tsao-Poo-Ying, who having finished a screen for the Emperor, amused himself by putting in here and there a few flies, which he had the satisfaction of seeing the Emperor try to flap away with his handkerchief. No less celebrated was Wan-Tse-Nen, who lived somewhere about the beginning of the eleventh century. It is said that having been commissioned to execute some mural decorations within the palace, he painted several pheasants, and that when some foreign envoys, who brought some falcons as a present to the Emperor, were introduced into the room, the birds of prey mistook the painted pheasants for live ones, and made a dash at the wall, more to the injury of their heads than to the satisfaction of their voracity.

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seemed to moderate the intensity of the solar heat. Arranged in the form of a huge peony, the Chinese symbol of beauty, was a magnificent screen composed of hawk's feathers ; two aviaries designed as miniature pagodas were tenanted by Indian birds of gorgeous plumage ; some Æolian "tiemaols" vibrated pleasantly in the air ; and these were only some out of many souvenirs that had been contributed by the absent lover.

La-oo herself was charming. Her beauty could not fail to commend itself to the most critical of European eyes. Her complexion was fair, escaping entirely the national characteristic of being yellow ; her eyelids had scarcely the least inclination towards the temples ; her hair, which was rather dark, was set off by a little bunch of peach-blossoms, fastened in by bodkins of green jade ; her teeth were small and white ; her eyebrows stippled in most delicately with Chinese ink. No mixture of honey and Spanish white had been allowed to enamel her cheek ; no circle of carmine gave a false ruddiness to her lip ; no line of pencilling joined eye to eye ; nor was there on her countenance a tinge of the rouge upon which the court annually expends ten million sapecks. La-oo would have nothing to do with cosmetics. Rarely as she left the retirement of her house, she knew well enough that it mattered not to her, and that she was at liberty to dispense with the ordinary distinctions which

Chinese ladies feel bound to exhibit when they appear in public.

As simple as elegant was her dress. Over a pleated skirt she wore a long robe, embroidered on the border, and fastened at the waist by a stomacher embossed with gold filagree; a pair of short trousers met her stockings of nankeen silk, and she wore slippers studded with pearls.

Her hands were delicately-formed, her long rose nails being each protected by a little guard of chased silver.

That her feet were small was to be attributed only to nature; it was not because they had been subjected to the barbarous deformation which has been recognized as a national usage in China for the last seven centuries, a practice which probably originated with some lame princess, although it has been laid to the caution of some jealous husbands. The operation is very simple; it consists merely in bandaging the toes tight down under the sole, leaving the heel perfectly untouched; but the effect is in the last degree injurious, as it utterly destroys the power of walking; it is a practice, however, that is rapidly dying out, so that nowadays scarcely three Chinese women in ten are to be met with who have in infancy been made the victims of the trying ordeal.

"Go and look again, old mother," again said La-oo.

"What's the use of looking?" answered Nan.

“Never mind, go and look ; I am sure there will be a letter for me to-day.”

Old Nan grumbled, and left the room.

La-oo took up a piece of needlework to amuse herself ; she was embroidering a pair of slippers for Kin-Fo. Embroidery is done by women of all classes.

The work soon dropped from her fingers. She rose and went to a bon-bon box, and taking out a few melon-seeds, crunched them between her little teeth. She took up a book. It was the Nushun, the code of directions which every married woman is bound to study. She glanced listlessly over its instructions :—

“The dawn, like the spring, is the proper time to work.”

“Rise betimes ; indulge not in slumber.”

“Be careful alike of the mulberry and the hemp.”

“Spare not to spin thy cotton and thy silk.”

“A woman’s virtues are her industry and economy.”

But La-oo was not in a mood for reading ; the precepts caught her eye, but her thoughts were far away ; she flung the book aside.

“Where is he now ?” she said to herself. “He must have returned from Canton ; when will he come here ? Koanine ! Koanine ! watch over his voyage !”

Her glance rested for a moment, almost mechanically, upon a patchwork tablecloth ; it was made of pieces as

minute as mosaic, and on it was pictured a mandarin-duck and its brood ; it was an emblem of fidelity.

Next, she went to a flower-stand and picked off a blossom at random.

"Ah !" she exclaimed ; "my fortune fails me ! I ought to have plucked a willow-bloom, the token of spring ; I see, here is a yellow chrysanthemum, the emblem of autumn and decay."

Not wanting to dwell upon the evil omen, she took up her lute and played a few chords of "The Clasped Hand," but the song refused to come to her lips, and she laid down the instrument without further effort to proceed.

"It is not often," she murmured to herself, "that his letters are so long coming. And his letters, too, how sweet they are ; not merely the words he writes, but the words he speaks ; you may hear them for yourself."

And her gaze involuntarily rested upon the phonograph with which he had supplied her. It was a carved box on a lacquered stand, corresponding exactly with what King had himself used at Shang-Hai. By means of it they had listened to each others' voices. For some days, however, the apparatus had been silent and unused.

Old Nan re-entered the room.

"Here's your letter !" she said, and left the boudoir as abruptly as she had entered it.

The envelope bore the Shang-Hai postmark ; but with

out waiting to examine the outside, the eager La-oo, radiant with smiles, tore it open, and extracted, not an ordinary letter, but a sheet of tinfoil marked with some indented dots that revealed nothing until they were submitted to the action of the phonograph, when she knew they would produce the inflexions of his very voice.

“A letter!” she cried; “and more than a letter—I shall hear him speak!”

Carefully she laid her treasure upon the surface of a cylinder within; she put the mechanism in motion, and distinctly recognized the tones of her lover’s voice:—

“La-oo, dearest little sister!

“Ruin has carried off the last sapeck of my property. My riches have gone like leaves in an autumn blast. I cannot make you the partner of my penury. Forget, forget for ever

“Your unfortunate and despairing

“KIN-FO.”

What a death-blow was this to all her expectations! Bitterness, she cried in her soul, bitterness more acrid than gentian had filled her cup! Had Kin-Fo forsaken her? What! did he think that she looked for her happiness in riches?

She was like a boy’s kite with a broken string; slowly, slowly she sank downwards to the earth.

Nan was promptly summoned.

But Nan did not hurry herself. When she came, she shrugged her shoulders and lifted her mistress up on her "hang." The hang was a bed warmed by artificial heat; but to the stricken La-oo the couch was cold stone, and sleepless were the five long watches of the weary night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CENTENARIAN.

THE following morning Kin-Fo, whose imperturbability over the affairs of life remained unaltered, went out quite alone, and with steady step took his way along the right-hand shore of the creek. Having crossed the river by the wooden bridge that connects the English colony with the American, he went straight to a fine-looking house that stood about midway between the mission-church and the American consulate.

At the entrance of the house was a large brass plate, inscribed in conspicuous characters with—

THE CENTENARIAN

Fire and Life Insurance Company.

Capital : 20,000,000 dollars.

Chief Agent : William J. Biddulph.

Without pausing Kin-Fo passed through the vestibule, pushed open an inner swing-door and found himself in an

office divided into two compartments by a horizontal balustrade fixed about breast-high. A few boxes, a number of account-books with massive metal clasps, an American safe, two or three tables at which clerks were writing, and an elaborate escritoire with compartments, appropriated to William Biddulph himself, made up the furniture of an apartment that seemed rather to belong to a house in the Broadway of New York than to any establishment on the Woo-sung.

William Biddulph was the principal representative in China for an important fire and life insurance company, which had its head-quarters at Chicago. The Centenarian had gained much of its popularity by its attractive title; it had offices and agents in every quarter of the world, and as its statutes were framed on a very liberal and enterprising scale, the business it did was continually extending. Even the Chinese were being gradually induced to adopt the modern system, by which so many of these companies are supported; a large number of their houses were already insured against loss by fire, and life-policies, with their various contingent advantages, were being more and more frequently taken up. The little escutcheon of the Centenarian was perpetually to be seen affixed to the face of buildings in all directions, and was not wanting on the pilasters of the rich yamen where Kin-Fo resided. The subject of fire-insurance had already been duly attended

to, so that it could not be that which led Kin-Fo to present himself now at the office, and inquire for William Biddulph.

Mr. Biddulph was within ; always, like a photographer, at the service of the public. He was a man of about fifty years of age, with a beard of unmistakably American type ; he was scrupulously dressed in black, and had a white cravat.

"May I ask," he said deferentially, "whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"Not altogether a stranger," was the reply ; "I am Kin-Fo of Shang-Hai."

"Ah ! yes ! certainly ! Mr. Kin-Fo of Shang-Hai, a client of ours ; policy No. 27,200. Most happy, sir, I assure you, if I can render you any further service."

"Thank you," answered Kin-Fo, adding, "I should wish to say a word or two with you in private."

"In private, by all means."

Accordingly the client was conducted into an inner room with double doors and hung with massive curtains, where a plot might have been schemed for overthrowing the reigning dynasty without the least fear of being overheard, even by the keenest "ti-pao." As Kin-Fo understood English and Biddulph equally well understood Chinese, conversation between them was a matter of no difficulty.

Kin-Fo took the seat which was pointed out to him in a rocking-chair close to the gas-stove, and at once opened his business.

"I am desirous of at once making an assurance upon my life in the Centenarian."

"Very happy to assist you, sir; the preliminaries can very soon be settled, and there will be nothing more except that you and I must sign the policy. You are actuated, I presume, by the natural desire to live to an advanced age."

"Advanced age! What do you mean?" said Kin-Fo abruptly. "I should have taken it for granted that insuring one's life contemplated the probability of an early death."

"O dear, no; quite the contrary. To insure in our office, sir, is to take a new lease of life; our clients are bound to live to a hundred. To insure in the Centenarian is the best of guarantees for a man becoming a centenarian himself."

The client looked at the agent to satisfy himself whether he was not joking, but he was as grave as a judge.

Perfectly satisfied with his scrutiny, Kin-Fo proceeded to enter into further particulars.

"I should wish to effect the insurance for two hundred thousand dollars."¹

¹ 40,000/.

Unprecedentedly large as the sum was, the agent exhibited no symptom of surprise, but merely repeated the words "two hundred thousand dollars," and inserted the amount in a memorandum book.

"The premium for this?" asked Kin-Fo.

Biddulph smiled, and after a moment's hesitation said,—

"I presume, sir, you are aware that the policy is forfeited and no portion of the premium is recoverable if the person insured should die by the hands of the party in whose favour the insurance is effected."

"Yes, I am quite aware of that."

"And may I ask," continued Biddulph, "against what class of risks you propose to insure?"

"Oh, against risks of any kind, of course," replied Kin-Fo promptly.

"Very good," answered Biddulph deliberately; "we insure against death either by land or by sea; either within or without the limits of the Chinese empire; we even insure against sentences of death by judicial verdict, against death by duelling, or in military service; but as you may imagine, the premiums in these various risks differ very much and in some cases are rather high."

"I must be prepared to pay whatever is necessary," said Kin-Fo; "but you have not mentioned another risk which might occur; you have not specified whether the Centenarian insures against suicide."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said the agent, and he rubbed his hands together with an air of extreme satisfaction; "you have alluded to one of our chief sources of profit; clients who insure against suicide are always those who, of all people in the world, are most tenacious of life; however, as you might imagine, it is one of the cases for which the premium is exceptionally heavy."

"The premium must be no obstacle. I have special reasons for the step I propose to take. I must agree to pay whatever is requisite."

"Very well, sir," answered Biddulph, and began to make some further entry in his note-book.

"If I understand correctly, sir, you wish to insure against drowning, against suicide, against—"

"Against everything, against anything!" cried Kin Fo, with as much energy as his nature would permit.

"Very good," repeated Biddulph.

"Tell me the premium," said Kin-Fo.

"Our premiums, my dear sir, are tabulated with mathematical precision; they are the pride and stronghold of the company; they are not, as formerly, based on the tables of Deparcieux."

"I know nothing about Deparcieux," said Kin-Fo, with impatience.

"Indeed," answered Biddulph, with an expression of surprise, "Deparcieux was a remarkable actuary, but antiquated;

now, in fact, dead. At the time he composed his elaborate tables, which are still in use in 'most European offices, average duration of life was lower than it is now. Our present calculations are reckoned on a higher average which our clients reap the advantage; they not only live longer, but they pay less."

"May I trouble you to inform me what is the amount of the premium I am to pay?" again asked Kin-Fo, as weary of listening to the praises of the Centenarian as the loquacious agent was desirous of repeating them.

"Before I can tell you the premium, sir, I must take liberty of inquiring your age."

"Thirty-one," said Kin-Fo.

"Thirty-one," repeated Biddulph, "at the age of thirty-one in any other office the premium would be 2.83 per cent; in the Centenarian it is only 2.72. You see what you gain by coming to us. Let us see; for 200,000 dollars yearly premium would be 5440 dollars."

"But that," Kin-Fo observed, "is for ordinary risks."

"Yes," said Biddulph.

"But for *all* risks, for everything, for suicide?" demanded Kin-Fo.

"True," said Biddulph, "that is another consideration."

The agent turned to the last page of the memorandum book that he held in his hand, and consulted a printed

list. After a little reflection, he looked up, and in a very gentle and insinuating tone said,—

“I hardly think we can do it under twenty-five per cent.”

“You mean at the rate of 50,000 dollars a year,” said Kin-Fo.

“Just so,” asserted Biddulph.

“And how must that premium be paid?” inquired the client.

“It may be paid annually in one sum, or it may be paid in monthly instalments, at your choice.”

“And what then, do you say, would be the payment for the first two months?”

“For two months in advance, the premium would be 8333 dollars; paid now, at the end of April, it would expire on the 30th of June.”

Kin-Fo took a bundle of paper-dollars from his pocket, and was about to pay the amount forthwith.

“Pardon me,” said the agent, “there is another little formality to which we must ask you to submit before the policy can be assigned.”

“Well, what is that?” asked Kin-Fo.

“You will have to receive a visit from our medical correspondent; he will examine you, and report whether you have any organic disease which is likely to shorten your life.”

“But what,” remonstrated Kin-Fo, “can be the object of

that, when I am not insuring my life against disease, but against violent death, against suicide?"

Biddulph smiled blandly.

"My dear sir, do you not see that the germs of a disease may already be discerned, which would carry you off in a month or two, and cost us 200,000 dollars right off?"

"Disease would not cost you more than suicide," Kin-Fo insisted.

The agent took his client's hand gently into his own, and stroked it slowly, saying,—

"Have I not had the pleasure of telling you already that out of the applicants who come to us, none live so long as those who insure against the risk of suicide? And I may take the liberty of adding that we reserve to ourselves the discretionary right of watching all their movements. Besides, what shadow of probability could there be that the wealthy Kin-Fo could ever contemplate self-destruction?"

"As much perhaps," replied Kin-Fo, "as that he should make the step of insuring his life at all."

"Ah, nothing of the sort," rejoined Biddulph, "insuring in the Centenarian means living to a good old age and nothing less."

Argument, it was evident, was not likely to induce the agent to compromise his opinion. He continued his inquiries by asking,—

"And in whose favour shall I have the honour of making the reversion of the 200,000 dollars?"

"Just what I want to explain," answered Kin-Fo; "I want 50,000 dollars to be pledged to my faithful friend Wang, and I want the residue, 150,000 dollars, to be the inheritance of Madam La-oo, of Peking."

Biddulph noted all the instructions in his book, and then inquired for Madam La-oo's age.

"Madam La-oo is twenty-one," said Kin-Fo.

"She will be of mature age before she comes in for the windfall," observed Biddulph, with a twinkle in his eye.

"And your friend Wang's age?" he added.

"He is fifty-five."

"Not much chance of the good philosopher handling his money at all."

"We shall see," sighed Kin-Fo.

"A man of fifty-five must be a fool to expect to get anything out of you, if you are to live to a hundred."

"As well, Mr. Biddulph, good morning."

The wealthy client was bowed, with all formality, out of the room.

On the next day, Kin-Fo received the visit of the company's

manager. He sent in his report,—

"I have a body of iron, muscles of steel, and a brain fit for organ-

No obstacle, therefore, stood in the way of the application being accepted, and in due time the policy was properly signed. La-oo and Wang were, of course, in utter ignorance of the provision thus made for their benefit, and only unforeseen events could reveal the circumstances to their knowledge.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

HOWEVER much it might please William Biddulph to see things in a rose-coloured light, there was no doubt that the capital of the Centenarian was seriously threatened with the loss of two hundred thousand dollars. There was no mistake about Kin-Fo's intention to put an end to himself; he could not see the least good in prolonging in poverty an existence which riches did not suffice to relieve of weariness and *ennui*.

The letter which had been so long delayed in its delivery had announced that the Central Bank of California had stopped payment. Here it was that the whole bulk of Kin-Fo's property had been invested; the intelligence seemed authoritative, and would soon be confirmed by the papers, and the fact of his ruin would quickly be known. Beyond what property was locked up in the bank, he had next to nothing in the world; he might sell his house at Shang-Hai, but the proceeds would be utterly inadequate.

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the departed, in whose honour a festival is duly observed in the second month.

In the same store where infants' cradles and wedding outfits are displayed for sale a variety of coffins is always to be found—"births, marriages, and deaths" supplying their demands at one common centre. Indeed, the purchase and possession of a coffin may be described as a *sine qua non* to a Chinese of the present day; no house is considered to be furnished without its coffin, which is not unfrequently presented by a son to a father as an appropriate token of the sincerest filial affection; it is deposited in the sanctuary, where it is periodically renovated and adorned, and even after it has received its consignment of mortal remains, it is often preserved for years with pious care. Altogether, respect for the dead is a fundamental element in the religious faith of the Chinese, and it must be owned that it contributes largely to the maintenance of family concord.

Kin-Fo's temperament, cool and averse to excitability, especially predisposed him to face the thought of death without flinching. He had made provision for the only two individuals for whom he was conscious of any affection, and now had nothing more to do but to carry out the intention he had formed; and to this he proceeded without any conception of committing a crime, but under the most solid conviction that he was doing a perfectly legiti-

mate act. His mind was fully made up ; no one, not even Wang, with all his influence, would be able to shake his determination ; not that Wang had any suspicion of his pupil's design, nor had Soon observed anything to make him guess what was on his master's mind, except that he had noticed that a singular indulgence had been shown to his blunders, and that, however much he might have deserved chastisement, his pigtail had been left without further mutilation.

A popular Chinese proverb says, " To get true happiness on earth you should live in Canton and die at Lai-Choo ;" the simple explanation being that at Canton the appliances of luxury are most readily obtained, while Lai-Choo does a large trade in coffins. It was now long since Kin-Fo had sent an order to Lai-Choo, and thence had procured a coffin, which was quite a masterpiece of its kind. Its arrival at Shang-Hai excited not the least surprise ; it was duly placed in the appointed chamber ; from time to time it was polished with wax, and left to await the hour when Kin-Fo's demise should bring it into requisition. At the same time that he bought the coffin, he bought a white cock, which was to be incarnated with the evil spirits that would otherwise hover around and obstruct the happy passage of the seven elements of the soul.

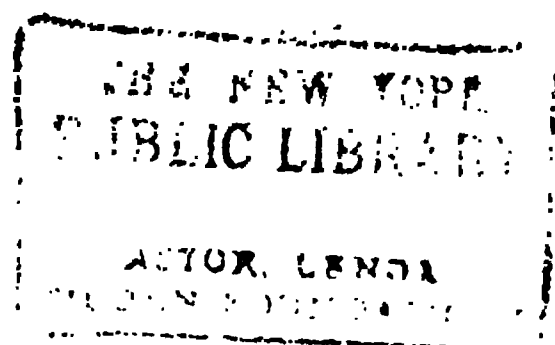
The mere possession of the coffin, however, did not quite satisfy Kin-Fo's mind. He felt it his duty to draw out an

elaborate programme for his funeral obsequies, and it will be seen that he by no means exhibited the same indifference to the details which belonged to the affairs of death as he affected towards the interests of life.

Taking a large sheet of what is generally known as "rice paper," although rice forms no ingredient in its manufacture, he proceeded to write down his instructions.

After giving his house at Shang-Hai to the young widow, and bequeathing to Wang a portrait of the Tai-Ping Emperor, legacies which they were to enjoy in addition to the benefit accruing to them from the assurance in the Centenarian, Kin-Fo went at once to the directions for his interment.

At the head of the *cortège*, in the place of relatives, of whom he had none, there was to be a number of friends, all dressed in white, the Chinese emblem of mourning. The streets, as far as the tomb, which was already erected in the suburbs of the town, were to be lined by a double row of attendants carrying either blue parasols, halberds, or silk screens, some of them bearing placards on which were inscribed the details of the ceremony; these were all to wear black tunics with white waistbands, and felt hats with red aigrettes. Behind the first group of friends a herald was to march dressed in red from head to foot, and beating a gong; he was to be followed by a portrait of the deceased Kin-Fo himself, borne in a richly decorated





Tien was to come the catafalque.

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shrine. Next in order was another group of friends, whose duty it would be to fall fainting at regular intervals upon cushions carried ready to receive them ; this group was to be succeeded by another, consisting entirely of young people, who would be protected by a blue and gold canopy, and whose task it was to scatter fragments of white paper, each perforated with a hole designed as an outlet by which any evil spirit might escape that was likely otherwise to join the procession.

Then was to come the catafalque. This was to be an enormous palanquin hung with violet silk, embroidered all over with gold dragons and supported by fifty bearers ; on either side were to be two rows of priests arrayed in grey, red, and yellow chasubles ; the recitations of their prayers were to alternate with the mingled roar of clarionets, gongs, and huge trumpets. Finally, an array of mourning coaches, draped in white, would bring up the rear.

Kin-Fo was quite aware that the directions he was giving could only be carried out by the exhaustion of all his little remnant of property, but he was doing nothing that the Chinese would think in the least extraordinary ; such spectacles are by no means unfrequent in the thoroughfares of Canton, Shang-Hai, and Péking, where the people regard them only as the natural homage due to the dead.

The day upon which Kin-Fo had ultimately settled to take his farewell of life was the 1st of May. In the course

of the afternoon a letter arrived from La-oo. The young widow placed at his disposal whatever little fortune she possessed ; his wealth, she protested, was nothing to her ; for him her affection was unchanged, unchangeable ; why should they not be content with modest means ? why should they not still be happy ?

But Kin-Fo saw nothing to shake his resolution. "She will reap the benefit of my death," he said.

He had yet to settle the precise means of his death. To this point he began now to devote his attention, indulging the hope that he might find in the circumstances of his departure from the world an emotion that he had failed to derive from his experiences in it.

Within the precincts of the yamen were four pretty little kiosks, or pavilions, all decorated with that fantastic skill that is so exclusive a gift of the Chinese artisan. Their names were significant : there was the kiosk of Happiness, into which Kin-Fo persistently refused to enter ; the kiosk of Fortune, for which he avowed the supremest contempt ; the kiosk of Pleasure, for which he had no taste ; the fourth was the kiosk of Long Life.

Thus far did Kin-Fo resolve—he would go that night to the pavilion of Long Life, and would be found there on the following morning happy in the sleep of death. There still remained the decision to be arrived at—by what method should he die ? Should he rip open his

stomach like a Japanese? Should he strangle himself with a silk girdle like a mandarin? Should he open a vein as he reclined in a perfumed bath, like the Roman epicure of old? He reviewed these various devices only to reject them all; to himself they all alike appeared brutal; to his attendants they would be utterly revolting. A few grains of opium, mixed with poison subtle but sure, would carry him painlessly out of the world. The choice was soon made.

As the sun began to sink towards the west, and Kin-Fo realized that he had now only a few hours to live, he determined to go out, and to take a last walk upon the plain of Shang-Hai, along the bank of the Wang-Pow, where he had often sauntered listlessly in the seasons of his *ennui*. He had not seen Wang all day, and did not catch sight of him anywhere as he left the yamen.

Very slowly he traversed the English territory, crossed the bridge over the creek, and, entering the French quarter, kept on till he came to the quay facing the native harbour. Thence, following the city wall as far as the Roman Catholic cathedral in the southern suburb, he turned to the right, and took the road leading to the pagoda of Loung-Hoo.

Here he found himself in the open country, on an extensive marshy plain that stretched far away to the wooded heights that bounded the valley of the Min. The

soil for the most part was given up to the cultivation of rice, except where it was broken by canals direct from the sea, or where some miserable reed-huts, with floors of yellow mud, were surrounded by patches of corn just raised above the level of the water. A number of dogs, white goats, geese, and ducks rarely failed to start off in alarm at the approach of a traveller along the narrow paths.

To the eye of a stranger the aspect of the country, highly cultivated though it is, would be decidedly repulsive. All the plains around the cities of China are like a vast cemetery, and on this plain there were coffins literally by hundreds strewn on the ground. As well as mounds of earth showing where interments had been made, there were whole pyramids rising one above another, like the scaffolding in a dockyard. It is alleged that it is forbidden to bury any of these while the existing dynasty occupies the throne, but whether or not this be so, there they are, lying in tiers, some elaborately painted, some altogether plain and unpretending ; some fresh and bright, some crumbling to dust ; but all awaiting apparently for years the rites of sepulture.

Quite familiar with the strange spectacle, Kin-Fo did not look much about him, otherwise his attention could hardly have failed in being arrested by two men, dressed as Europeans, who had been following him ever since he left the yamen. They were apparently bent on keeping

him in sight, walking a little distance behind him, and regulating their pace precisely by his. Occasionally they exchanged a few words, and were evidently spies engaged to watch his proceedings. Both of them under thirty years of age, they were strong and agile, firm of limb, and keen of eye, and were careful not for a moment to let him escape their observation. When, after walking nearly three miles, Kin-Fo began to retrace his steps, they likewise turned and followed like bloodhounds on a track.

Meeting several miserable-looking beggars, Kin-Fo gave them some trifling alms, and a little farther on he came across some of the native Christian women who had been trained by the French sisters of charity, each of them carrying a basket on her back in which to put any child that might be found abandoned in the streets, and to convey it to a foundling-home. These women have gained for themselves the nickname of "rag-pickers;" and, truly, what they gather from the by-ways of the city are often little to be distinguished from bundles of rags. Kin-Fo emptied his purse into their hands. The spies glanced at each other with a look of surprise at an act so entirely contrary to the habits of the Chinese. Only an unusual state of mind could result in so unusual an action on the part of a Celestial.

It was growing dusk when he reached the quay, but the floating population had not gone to rest; shouts and songs

were resounding through the air, and he paused a few moments ; it struck him that it would be curious to listen to the last song he should ever hear on earth.

A young Tankadere who was taking her sampan across the dark waters of the Wang-Pow began to sing,—

“ I deck my boat with a thousand flowers,
 Counting the hours ;
 My prayers to the blue-god ever rise
 Homeward to turn my lover's eyes ;
 My soul impassion'd ever cries,
 Will he come to-morrow ? ”

“ To-morrow ! ” thought Kin-Fo to himself ; “ where shall I be to-morrow ? ”

“ I know not what land of cold or drought
 His steps have sought ;
 Roaming beyond old China's wall
 Heedless what perils may befall ;
 Ah ! could he hear my heart-sick call—
 He would come to-morrow.

To seek for wealth, O, why didst thou stay
 Far, far away ?
 Why dost thou tarry ? the months glide by,
 Waiteth the priest the bands to tie,
 Phoenix ¹ to phoenix ever nigh ;
 Come, O come to-morrow ! ”

The voice died away in the distance, and Kin-Fo began to reflect ; although he acknowledged to himself that

¹ Two phoenixes, a common emblem of marriage, in China.

riches are not everything in the world, he adhered to his view that the world is not worth having without them.

In another half-hour he had reached his home, and the spies were obliged to relinquish their watch over his movements. He directed his way quietly and unobserved to the pavilion of Long Life ; opening the door quickly, he closed it as quickly behind him, and found himself in a little chamber entirely without light, until he put a match to a lamp with a ground glass shade that stood ready for use. Close at hand was a table formed of a solid slab of jade, and on this there was a box already provided with opium, and with several of the deadliest poisons.

Taking a few grains of the opium, he put them into the ordinary red clay pipe, and prepared to smoke.

"And now," he said, "now for the sleep from which I am never more to wake !"

Suddenly he dashed the pipe to the ground.

"Confound it!" he cried ; "I am not going to die in this way without a sense of emotion. Emotion I want, and I mean to have it ! To die in this way ! Out of the question !"

He unlocked the door of the kiosk of Long Life, and hurried off to Wang's apartment.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SERIOUS CONTRACT.

WANG had not yet retired to bed ; he was lounging on a couch, reading the latest number of the *Peking Gazette*, and frowning very decidedly over the panegyrics that that journal passed on the reigning dynasty.

Bursting into the room, Kin-Fo threw himself into an armchair, and blurted out,—

“Wang, I have come to ask you a favour!”

“A thousand favours, if you will, my son!” said the philosopher, as he deliberately laid down his newspaper.

“Well, for the present, one is enough. Grant me the one I ask, and I will exonerate you from the nine hundred and ninety-nine. However, I must warn you beforehand you are not to expect any thanks from me afterwards.”

“I do not understand you,” replied Wang ; “will you explain yourself?”

“To begin with,” said Kin-Fo gravely ; “I must tell you I have lost all my property ; I am a ruined man.”

"Indeed, is it so?" answered Wang in a tone that implied that the intelligence did not give him any serious concern, but rather the reverse.

"Yes; it is true. You remember the letter that Soon ought to have given me; it announced the collapse of the Californian Bank. To me, you know, that means the loss of the last sapeck of my property. Except this yamen, and a thousand dollars or so to pay my debts, I have no means of living beyond another month or two."

"Then," said Wang, "it is no longer the wealthy Kin-Fo I have the pleasure of addressing?"

"No, it is Kin-Fo the impoverished, now; but it matters not; poverty has no terrors for me."

"Well said, my son;" and Wang raised himself as he spoke, and repeated, "Well said; here is the glad reward of all my teaching. Hitherto you have only vegetated, now you are going to live. Recollect how Confucius says that we always find fewer misfortunes than we look for; surely you remember the passage in the Nun-Schunn, 'There are ups and down in life; the wheel of fortune rests not, but rolls on; the breezes of spring-time are fickle, but rich or poor, do thy duty.' My son, we must now be off and on our way; we have now to earn our daily bread!"

The philosopher made a movement as if he were prepared to quit the sumptuous mansion without a moment's delay.

"Not quite so fast, my friend," said Kin-Fo ; "when I tell you that the condition of poverty has no terrors for me, you must not understand that I have the least intention to endure it."

"How so? What do you intend?"

"To die!"

"Die!" repeated the philosopher contemptuously. "You must know well enough that those who intend to commit suicides never reveal their purpose beforehand ; it is a secret they always keep."

"It is by the merest chance that I am not dead now," said Kin-Foo calmly.

"What do you mean?"

"It was only because I found myself face to face with death," continued Kin-Fo, paying no regard to Wang's interruption, "and because I experienced nothing but emotion, that I flung aside the poison I was about to take and came to you."

"Ah, yes, I see ; you thought we might as well stay together," Wang answered, smiling.

"Nothing of the sort, Wang ; I want you to live."

"Why am I to live?" asked the philosopher.

"For the very purpose of killing me," said Kin-Fo. "this is the favour I have come to ask."

It was a startling proposal, but Wang gave not the slightest indication of surprise. Yet Kin-Fo, who was

watching him narrowly, could not help fancying that there was a strange glitter in his eyes. Was there a stirring up within of the blood of the old Tai-Ping? Had the lapse of eighteen years been insufficient to quench the sanguinary instinct of his early days? Was there not something that kindled anew an ancient and forgotten glow in the very prospect of soiling his hands with blood, even though it were the blood of the son of his departed benefactor.

But in an instant the unwonted fire was gone, and the eye lost its flash, to let the countenance subside into an expression even more sedate and serious than its wont.

He retired slowly to the couch from which he had risen, and said thoughtfully,—

“This, then, is the favour that you want to ask?”

“Yes, this. Perform it, and you may assure yourself that you have amply discharged every obligation due to my father or myself.”

“And you are in earnest?” demanded Wang.

“Most solemnly,” said Kin-Fo. “You know that on the 25th of June, the twenty-eighth day of the sixth month, I shall complete my thirty-first year. Before that date I must die, and the covenant which I make with you is that I die by your hands.”

“How? when? where?” ejaculated Wang.

“How, when, where, I care not. My purpose is not to know. Whether sitting or standing, waking or sleeping,

by day or by night, by open violence or by secret art, by steel or by poison, that rests with you. By the date named to you I must die at your hands ; and the condition which I insist on is that I am to have no intimation beforehand. Thus shall every minute of the next fifty-five days be the source of the emotion of expectation, the looking out for the sudden termination of my life !"

All the time that Kin-Fo had been speaking, he had exhibited an animation, strongly in contrast to his ordinary lassitude ; but his unusual impulsiveness had not betrayed him into any reprehensible lack of prudence. He had fixed the latest limit of his death for a date five days before the expiration of the policy, being quite alive to the recollection that he had no available funds by which he could renew it.

The philosopher sat and listened gravely, glancing repeatedly, it might be in unconsciousness, at the picture of the Tai-Ping monarch that hung before him, but having no conception of how it had just been made a legacy to himself.

"You have heard what I have to say," said Kin-Fo, after a short pause. "You are ready, I presume, to meet my wishes ? You undertake to kill me, do you not ?"

Wang made a hasty gesture of assent. Perhaps he was thinking how, when under an insurgent banner, he had done worse deeds before. But instead of giving a de-

finite answer to Kin-Fo's question, he met it by another :—
"Are you sure that you are so ready to sacrifice your chance of living on to a fine old age?"

"I tell you, Wang, my resolve is firm as adamant. To be old and rich is bad enough; to be old and poor is intolerable."

"And what about the lovely young widow at Peking? Have you forgotten her? Heed you not the proverb, 'The willow with the willow, the flower with the flower, two hearts united make a century of spring?'"

Kin-Fo shrugged his shoulders, saying, "A hundred years of spring may be followed by a hundred more of winter."

He reflected a moment, and continued :—

"No; La-oo's life with me would be a blighting disappointment, miserable, drear. My death will secure her a fortune. And you, too, Wang, I have not forgotten you; I have left you 50,000 dollars."

"Your foresight seems complete," replied the philosopher; "you do not leave me scope to raise up one single objection."

"Yes, there is one obstacle," answered Kin-Fo; "and it surprises me that you do not suggest it. You must know that the deed to which you pledge yourself will cause you to be hunted down as an assassin in cold blood."

"Cowards and fools are caught," replied Wang significantly. "I am willing to undertake the risk."

"And I, for my part," said Kin-Fo, "am resolved beforehand to insure you safe protection. I give you indemnity."

He went to the table, took up a sheet of paper, calmly wrote, in clear bold characters :—

"Wearied and disgusted with my life, I have voluntarily sought my death.—" KIN-FO."

CHAPTER IX.

SUSPENSE.

AT the office of the Centenarian, on the following morning, William Biddulph had an interview with the two detectives whom he had commissioned to keep a watch over his new client.

"Last evening," Craig was saying, "we followed him for a long walk into the country."

"And certainly he had not the least appearance of being likely to put an end to himself," continued Fry.

"We kept pace with him all the way back to his own house," said Craig.

"But had no opportunity of getting inside," added Fry.

"And how is he this morning?" Biddulph asked.

"Well and strong as the bridge of Palikao," they answered in a breath.

Craig and Fry were cousins, and genuine Americans. Had they been the Siamese twins, their identity could scarcely have been more complete; the same brains, the

same thoughts, the same motives, and even the same stomachs seemed to belong to them both ; their very arms and legs appeared to be at each other's disposal, and in speaking, one of them almost invariably completed the sentence which the other had begun.

"No ; I suppose you could not get into the house," said Biddulph.

The spies declared that they hardly thought that could be managed.

"And yet it ought to be done," continued the agent ; "it will never answer for the company to lose two hundred thousand dollars. You will have to keep a good look-out upon this gentleman for a couple of months, and longer if he should renew his policy."

"There is a valet in the house," said Fry.

"Who probably could give some information of what goes on within," said Craig.

"Ay, get hold of him," replied Biddulph ; "make him all the compliments that a Chinaman enjoys so well ; bribe him with drink, or with money if necessary ; you shall lose nothing by your pains."

Accordingly, the two men put themselves as soon as possible in communication with Soon, who was nothing loth to accept either a glass of American drink or a present of a few taels.

By dint of inquiry a good many particulars were got out

of him. Had his master lately exhibited any change in his manner? No, except that he had been rather more indulgent than usual to his valet. Had he any dangerous weapons in his possession? No, he had no arms whatever. How did he live? On food of the most ordinary kind. At what hour did he rise? In the fifth watch at daybreak. At what hour did he go to bed? The second watch, ever since Soon had been in his service, had been his hour for retiring. Did he appear preoccupied, or distressed like one weary of life? No, though he was never a man of exuberant spirits, he was never in the least gloomy; in fact, for the last day or two, he had been rather more cheerful than usual. Had he any poison in his possession that he would be likely to take? No; Soon thought it most unlikely; that very morning, by his master's orders, he had flung away a lot of globules into the Wang-Poo simply because they might be dangerous.

The cross-examination did not elicit a single fact that could in any way arouse the fears of Biddulph. Never had the wealthy Kin-Fo appeared in a happier or more prosperous condition. Still Craig and Fry felt their professional reputation too much at stake to allow them to relax their vigilance, and having come to the conclusion that Kin-Fo was not likely to commit suicide in his own house, they followed him more perseveringly than ever when he left home; they took care, besides, to cultivate a closer intimacy

with Soon, who was ready to talk freely enough with acquaintances at once so agreeable and so generous.

As for Kin-Fo himself, it would be too much to say that he had begun to have a real clinging to life now that he had determined to leave it, but the feeling of suspense had intertwined itself into his existence, and given rise to emotions to which he had hitherto been a stranger, and which began to thrill in his breast. He had hung, as it were, the sword of Damocles above his head, and it was in itself an excitement for him to know that it might fall at any moment.

Since the night on which they had entered into their contract, Kin-Fo and Wang had had no intercourse ; perhaps the philosopher had been out, or perhaps he was confining himself to his own room, engaged in devising for fresh execution one of the various schemes of assassination with which his early experience as a Tai-Ping had made him familiar. Kin-Fo could only form his own conjecture about the way in which Wang was employing his time, but the result was that curiosity of a new and personal character was being awakened in his mind, and to Kin-Fo curiosity was a new sensation.

As hitherto, they both met at the same table at meals but their conversation on those occasions always turned upon the most ordinary and indifferent topics. There could be no doubt, however, that Wang had become some

what gloomy and taciturn ; there was an abstracted look in his eye that his spectacles, huge as they were, could not conceal ; his appetite, ordinarily good, almost entirely failed him, the most delicate dishes and the costliest wines being of no avail to give him a proper enjoyment of his meals.

On the other hand, Kin-Fo seemed to relish every dish that came to table. The consequence was that his appetite wonderfully revived, and every day he not only made a good dinner, but digested it perfectly. It was, at least, quite evident that the secret use of poison was not the means by which Wang was seeking to bring about his end.

Wang had every facility for accomplishing the task he had undertaken ; the door of Kin-Fo's bedroom was always open ; either by day or by night he was free to enter, and could choose his own time for striking his victim, asleep or awake. In anticipation of being attacked in this way, Kin-Fo had so far considered the matter as to entertain the hope that any blow that might be struck might go straight to his heart.

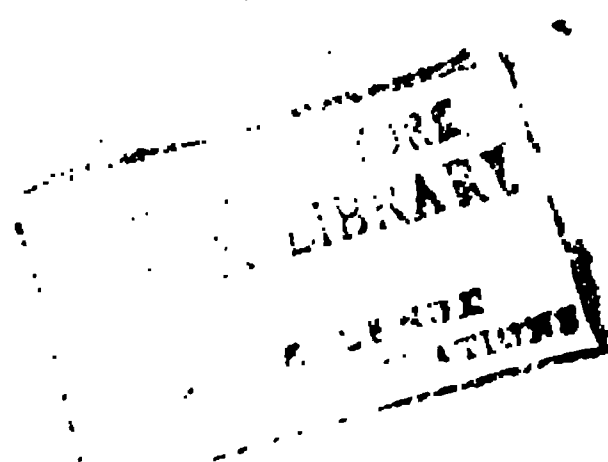
So quickly, however, did Kin-Fo get accustomed to anticipations of this character that after a very few nights he slept quite soundly, awaking each morning bright and refreshed.

After a time it occurred to him that perhaps Wang

shrank from perpetrating the deed under a roof where he had been so long and so hospitably entertained. To obviate this difficulty and to afford every chance, Kin-Fo would go long distances into the country, always choosing the most deserted roads ; he would linger as late as the fourth watch in the most cut-throat quarters of the town, where murder might be committed with the utmost impunity ; he would wander through the dark and narrow streets, jostled by drunkards until the early hours of the morning, when the bell of the muffin-man and his cry "man-toou," "man-toou," heralded the dawn of day ; but he ever returned from his peregrinations as safe and well as he had set out, quite unconscious that however capricious his movements, they had never ceased to be under the surveillance of the indefatigable cousins Craig and Fry.

If things were to go on in this fashion, Kin-Fo began to fear that he should grow so accustomed to the condition of living a precarious existence that all his old *ennui* must very soon return ; as it was, hours would repeatedly elapse without the thought of his impending death ever crossing his mind at all.

An incident, however, occurred on the 12th of May which supplied a fresh excitement to his imagination. Happening to pass the doorway of Wang's apartment, he caught sight of the philosopher cautiously feeling the edge of a poignard with his fingers ; watching a moment longer, he





Wang was seen brandishing the poignard in the air. Page 9

saw him dip the weapon into a violet-coloured bottle of very suspicious appearance ; another instant, and Wang was seen brandishing the poignard in the air, his countenance assuming an expression so ferocious that the blood seemed to mount into his very eyes.

" Ah ! that's it, is it ? very good !" said Kin-Fo, passing on his way without having been observed.

For the whole of the day Kin-Fo made a point of not leaving his own room, but Wang made no appearance. Night came on, and he went to bed ; morning came, and he was still alive and well. Was it not provoking ? Were not all his emotions going to waste ? Wang was a procrastinator, why else did he suffer ten days to pass ? What could make him dilly-dally in this way ? No doubt the luxuries of Shang-Hai had enervated him ; he had lost his nerve.

Wang, meanwhile, was becoming more gloomy and more restless than ever ; he began to be perpetually wandering about the yamen, and it was noticed that he made repeated visits to the chamber where the costly coffin from Lai-Choo was deposited. Not long afterwards it was mentioned by Soon to his master that orders had been given for the coffin itself to be dusted, cleaned, and re-varnished.

" He is making it all clean and comfortable for you, you see," said Soon confidentially.

Three more days elapsed, and still nothing transpired.

Was it possible that Wang was contemplating that the whole of the stipulated period should run out? Did he intend to postpone his action till the extreme limit of the time? If it were so, the result would be that death at last must come as no surprise at all.

On the 15th, another significant fact came to Kin-Fo's knowledge. He had passed an unusually restless night, and at about six in the morning awoke from a distressing dream in which he thought that Prince Ien, the potentate of the infernal regions, had condemned him not to appear before him until the twelve-hundreth moon should rise upon the Celestial Empire. This was to allot him a life of another century. Everything, surely, was conspiring to thwart him. It was consequently in no good mood that he rose that morning, and decidedly in a bad temper did Soon find him when he entered to give his accustomed services at the toilet.

"Out of the room, you rascal, before I kick you out!"

The valet was somewhat taken aback by a greeting so different to what he had lately received from his master, but having something to communicate he did not retreat.

"Out of the room, I say!" repeated Kin-Fo.

"I was only going to say—" began Soon.

"Off, you scoundrel!" said Kin-Fo.

"That Wang—" continued the servant.

"Wang ! well, what about Wang ?" cried Kin-Fo, and he caught tight hold of Soon's pigtail.

Soon wriggled about in his master's grasp, in terror as to the fate that was to befall his tail, but in reply to the repeated demand, said,—

"He has ordered your coffin to be put into the Kiosk of Long-Life !"

A sudden gleam of satisfaction spread itself over Kin-Fo's face.

"Is it really so ?" he asked.

"The order is given," replied Soon.

"Here, my good fellow, are ten taels for you ; go and see that the order is attended to."

Nothing could exceed Soon's astonishment ; he hurried away, thinking to himself that if his master had gone mad, it was not a bad thing that his madness had taken a generous turn.

Conviction now came upon Kin-Fo's mind. Here was clear evidence that matters were coming to a crisis. No doubt Wang had come to the conclusion that he would kill him on the very spot where he had himself resolved to die. How long, how slow that day ! the hands upon the clock scarce seemed to stir ! but at last the shadows lengthened, and night brooded upon the yamen.

Kin-Fo came to the determination that he would take up his quarters in the pavilion of Long-Life. He entered

as expecting never to come out alive. He flung himself upon a soft sofa, and there he lay and waited. In the still silence of the solitude he began to reflect ; he thought of the unprofitableness of his past existence ; he pondered on the weariness and *ennui* of his old career ; poverty was no better than wealth ; he thought upon La-oo ; his attachment to her was a bright spot in his memory ; even now his heart beat at the recollection of her love ; but, no ; he was never going to involve her in his misery.

Thus passed the fourth watch, when nature, animate and inanimate, seems all at repose. Kin-Fo listened. His eye sought to penetrate the darkness. More than once he heard the creak of footsteps. More than once he was sure that a gentle hand was laid upon the door. A kind of longing mingled itself with a kind of dread. Why did he not fall asleep and so await in unconsciousness the approach of the Tai-Ping ?

But the fourth watch passed, and the fifth watch dawned. Day was about to break, when suddenly the door of the pavilion was opened roughly.

"The time has come !" cried Kin-Fo, starting up. His life seemed concentrated in that single instant.

It was not Wang.

It was only Soon. He held a letter in his hand. The letter was marked "Urgent."

"I have brought it at once," said Soon.

Kin-Fo seized the letter; it bore the San Francisco postmark. One glance at the inside revealed its contents, and Kin-Fo rushed impetuously from the pavilion, shouting,—

“Wang, Wang!”

He darted into the philosopher's apartment, but in a moment was out again, still calling at the top of his voice:

“Wang, Wang, Wang!”

But Wang was not to be found. His bed had never been slept in. The whole house was aroused; search was made in every quarter of the yamen; no trace of him was to be seen. It was only certain that Wang had gone!

CHAPTER X.

A STRICT WATCH.

"ALL a trick, Mr. Biddulph, all a trick !" said Kin-Fo, in an interview which, as soon as possible after the receipt of his communication from San Francisco, he took care to have with the manager of the Centenarian ; "it was nothing more than an American stroke of business."

"But it was very clever," replied William Biddulph, complacently ; "everybody believed it, and it succeeded."

"My correspondent," continued Kin-Fo, "was certainly taken in ; but he now writes me word that the stoppage was all a stratagem. The shares fell eighty per cent. In a week all was afloat again. The bank bought up all the depreciated shares, and when the inquiry was made, the answer was ready ; the whole concern could pay 175 per cent. Till this letter came I had no doubt I was ruined."

"Yes ; and being a beggar, you thought you would lay violent hands upon yourself?" said Biddulph.

“Just so ; but no ; not exactly that ; I was hourly expectation of being assassinated.”

“Either catastrophe would have cost us two hundred thousand dollars. Let me congratulate you upon your escape.”

And in genuine American fashion, Biddulph grasped Kin-Fo's hand and shook it with much energy.

The client proceeded to confide the true state of the case to the manager's ear ; he told him how he had contracted with a colleague to kill him within a certain time and how he had given a written guarantee by which the murderer could be protected from the consequences of his act.

“But the serious part of it all is this,” continued Kin-Fo ; “the contract still stands ; he is still bound to take my life ; and there is no doubt he will keep to his bargain and kill me within the stipulated time.”

“May I ask whether the hired assassin is a friend of yours ?” inquired Biddulph.

“Yes ; and moreover, he comes into 50,000 dollars by my death.”

“Ah ! yes ; then I understand ; the friend is the philosopher Wang, whose interest is secured by the police. But surely he is not a man who would perpetrate such an act as this ?”

Kin-Fo was on the point of explaining how Wang was

in sober truth, a Tai-Ping, and how he had probably done dark deeds enough to make the whole Centenarian establishment bankrupt if his victims had happened to be their clients; but he was not disposed in any way to compromise Wang's life.

Eighteen years indeed had passed since Wang had taken any part in the bloody proceedings of the Tai-Ping confederacy, but perhaps any revelation concerning him even now might result in his being denounced as a revolutionist, and bring him under the suspicion of the government.

Accordingly, Kin-Fo forbore from saying more than that he believed that Wang would hold himself bound to fulfil his contract.

Biddulph considered for a moment, and then said,—

“Obviously, there is only one thing to be done; you must see Wang; you must make him understand that the contract is cancelled, and he will have to restore you the indemnity.”

“Easier said than done,” answered Kin-Fo; “the difficulty is that Wang has disappeared, no one knows whither.”

“Oh, oh!” cried Biddulph; “that’s bad,” and he looked perplexed.

There was a mutual silence for some time.

“I presume, sir,” said Biddulph presently, “you do not
to be assassinated now?”

"Quite the reverse. Why should I? The temporary collapse of the bank has doubled my fortune, and I have doubled my inducement to live. I want to get married."

"Of course," said Biddulph, with the blandest of smiles.

"But you see I am not safe until Wang is found; or certainly not so long as this policy is in force."

"Neither is the office safe," observed Biddulph in an undertone.

"Until the 25th of June," continued Kin-Fo, "my very existence will be in peril."

"Yes, until the 25th of June," said Biddulph, "the Centenarian will be responsible," and the manager paced the room, deliberating, with his hands behind him.

"I tell you what it is, sir," he said, after a few moments' pondering; "we must find your friend, the philosopher, even if he has hidden himself in the bowels of the earth."

"I hope you may," answered Kin-Fo.

"Meanwhile, we must take measures for protecting you from assassination, in the same way as we have guarded you from suicide."

"In the name of mercy, what do you mean?" ejaculated Kin-Fo.

"Why, ever since the day you signed the policy with us, two of my people have been assiduously keeping a watch upon all your doings; they have been everywhere as faithful to you as your shadow."

"And I not know it!"

"You might have known it had your look-out been as sharp as theirs; but they are cautious folks. I have not the least doubt they have followed you here. They have seen you in; they are waiting to see you out."

"Is it possible?" said Kin-Fo, speaking to himself.

"Craig! Fry!" called Biddulph, without raising his voice very much.

The two men entered.

"By your leave, sir, I will now entrust these employés of mine with a fresh commission. Hitherto they have been protecting you from yourself; they have kept guard over you that you should not commit suicide; they will henceforth protect you from mischief from without; they will guard you so that you receive no injury from Wang."

Kin-Fo had no alternative but to submit, and the detectives accepted their altered engagement without comment.

The next thing was to decide upon the line of action to be taken. As Biddulph remarked, two courses were open to them; either they might keep Kin-Fo constantly confined to his house under the surveillance of Craig and Fry, and take care that Wang did not enter unobserved, or they might pursue Wang till they discovered him, and make him surrender the document in his possession.

"By all means hunt out Wang," said Kin-Fo, "he

knows my yamen so well that whenever he pleases, can find his way in without being seen."

"Yes; we will find Wang if possible," assented Biddulph; "but we must not lose sight of you."

"You will do no harm to Wang," Kin-Fo pleaded.

"He should be brought dead or alive," said Craig.

"He should be found alive or dead," repeated Fry.

"Oh, alive, or not at all," said Kin-Fo earnestly.

The plan of proceeding settled, Biddulph and Kin-Fo took leave of each other, and the wealthy Chinaman escorted *nolens volens* by his body-guard, went home.

Very sincere was the regret with which Soon discovered that Craig and Fry had taken up their abode under his master's roof. Having no more questions to answer, he would have no more taels to receive. And what made matters worse, Kin-Fo had again commenced to censure and chastise him bitterly for his blunders and his idleness. Poor Soon! he little knew what the future had in store for him.

The first care of Kin-Fo was to send a "phonogram" to Peking. He was anxious not to lose an hour in announcing the recovery of his wealth, and La-oo was enraptured, independently of the tenor of the communication, at hearing once more the voice that she had feared was silenced for ever. The seventh moon, said the lovers, should not wane before he would be at her side, ne-

more to leave her ; but before that time he could not see her, lest he should leave her the second time a widow.

La-oo could not understand the meaning of the last words of the letter ; but she knew that the lover promised to come, and to quit her no more, and this made her, that day, the happiest of women in Peking.

Very complete was the reaction that had set in upon all Kin-Fo's ideas and feelings. With the access of fortune had come an entire revolution in his view of life, and the friends that he had entertained at dinner so recently in Canton would scarcely have recognized their unimpassioned, apathetic host ; while Wang himself could hardly have believed his senses.

No trace of Wang was yet to be discovered. The foreign quarters, the bazaars, the streets, the suburbs were searched ; every corner of Shang-Hai was explored ; the keenest of the "ti-paos" were put upon the scent, but all in vain ; there was no clue, no vestige, no sign.

Craig and Fry grew more uneasy. More and more tenaciously they adhered close to Kin-Fo's side, they ate at his table, they slept in his room, they tried to make him wear a shirt of mail, and did their best to persuade him to eat nothing but boiled eggs, which, they said, could not be poisoned. Against these restrictions the wealthy householder naturally rebelled ; just as well, he said, for the next

two months, might he be locked up in the iron safe at the office of the Centenarian.

Looking at the matter from an official point of view, William Biddulph made the practical suggestion that the premium should be returned, and the policy destroyed. Kin-Fo, however, would not listen to the proposal; the bargain was made, and he would abide by the consequences. Finding him thus resolute, Biddulph acquiesced, only assuring him that he was fortunate in being in such good keeping as that of the office he had himself the honour to represent.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNPLEASANT NOTORIETY.

SEVERAL days passed, and as no efforts succeeded in covering the whereabouts of Wang, Kin-Fo began to chafe at the confinement and inaction that were being imposed on him. Biddulph himself became somewhat uneasy. Although at first he had thought it unlikely that Wang would carry the covenanted deed into execution, he was bewildered, and began now to realize that in China strange things might happen even more than in America; and at last he entered into Kin-Fo's opinion; that the mysterious disappearance of Wang was only the prelude to a sudden appearance when he would suddenly descend like a thunderbolt, and perpetrate the final act. The first blow once given, the philosopher would present himself at the office of the Centenarian, and claim his allotted portion.

Directly, indirectly, by all means, by any means, thought Biddulph, such a scheme must be frustrated. He reso-

advertise; and, accordingly, not only had notices repeatedly inserted in the *Peking Gazette*, the *Tching-Pao*, and other Chinese newspapers published in Hong-Kong and Shang-Hai, but sent them by telegraph to all the leading journals of Europe and America.

It was first announced:—

“WANG, of Shang-Hai, is hereby informed that the contract made on the 2nd of May, between himself and Kin-Fo, also of Shang-Hai, is null and void, the said Kin-Fo having determined to die a centenarian.”

This advertisement was almost immediately followed by another:—

“REWARD.—Notice is hereby given that a reward of thirteen hundred taels, or two thousand dollars, is offered to any one giving information as to the present residence of WANG, of Shang-Hai. Apply to William J. Biddulph, Centenarian Insurance Company, Shang-Hai.”

It was not in the least likely that Wang was traversing any distant quarter of the world, during the few weeks that had been left open to him for the fulfilment of his compact; it was far more probable that he was only concealing himself somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood, ready to avail himself of a favourable opportunity: but Biddulph was not inclined to leave any stone unturned to bring about his discovery.

The advertisements he issued were made more and more

sensational. One morning a paragraph would appear headed in large capitals :—

“WANG! WANG! WANG!”

on the next a similar paragraph, beginning :—

“KIN-FO! KIN-FO! KIN-FO!”

Inevitably the result was that Wang and Kin-Fo became notorious names throughout the empire.

“Where is Wang?”

“What has Wang been up to?”

“Have you caught Wang?”

Ridiculous inquiries of this kind were in everybody's mouths, until even the children caught the infection, and about the streets crying out,—

“Who has found Wang?”

Scarcely less notorious became the name of Kin-Fo. Thus publicly announced as desiring to live to a hundred, he became the butt of perpetual jokes. The Emperor's elephant just completing its twentieth lustre in the stables, it was said, had found a new rival; the imperial yellow robe,¹ it was observed, had found a new claimant. Jests without number were bandied about by mandarins.

¹ Every Chinaman who attains his eightieth year enjoys the privilege of wearing a yellow robe. Yellow is the Imperial colour, and permission for its use is only granted as an honour to old age.

evil and military, by merchants on the exchange, by loungers in the streets, and by the watermen in their boats. One comic song, set to the tune of Man-tchiang-houng, "the wind that whistles through the willows," was composed upon the subject, and was succeeded by another called "The Centenarian's five watches," which had a prodigious sale at three sapecks a copy.

The Chinese delight in fun, and, ever ready for a joke, they are apt to allow their love of caricature to intrude almost too much into the reserve of private life; but the recent advertisements, it must be owned, opened up to them a fair topic for entertainment.

To Biddulph the sensation that was created was of course highly satisfactory; it answered his purpose in every way. What effect it had upon Wang no one could tell, as he succeeded in evading the most vigorous search that was set on foot to discover him; but to poor Kin-Fo the notoriety which he had attracted was the very reverse of pleasant. It soon became impossible for him to walk along the streets or quays without being thronged by a set of idlers; nor did he escape the nuisance when he went out into the country; while he could never return to his yamen without finding a regular mob assembled at the door. Every morning he was vociferously summoned to the balcony, that the populace might see for themselves that he had not been consigned to his coffin; and bulletins

were published regularly in the daily journals, in the fashion of the Imperial Court Circular, to record his state of health, and report all his movements.

To endure such a condition of things was out of the question. Existence on such terms was intolerable. The morning of the 21st he hurried off to Biddulph, who acquainted him with his intention of quitting Shanghai forthwith.

The agent, really concerned for the Company's interests, pointed out to him the great risk he was running.

"Never mind!" said Kin-Fo, "I will take my chance, and you must use greater precautions."

"But consider," pleaded Biddulph.

"I am going," interrupted Kin-Fo.

"Going where?"

"Anywhere; straight ahead."

"Where shall you stop?"

"Nowhere."

"And when shall you come back?"

"Never."

"But if we find Wang?"

"A plague upon Wang!"

"But remember your bargain."

"Yes, I was a fool."

"We may catch Wang yet."

"Let him go to the devil."

It must be confessed, however, that in his heart Kin-Fo had the most intense anxiety for Wang to be found. The knowledge that his life was gratuitously placed in the hands of another was now a perpetual torment to him; it was worse than living in a state of siege, and the prospect of going through more than another month of such suspense was beyond endurance.

"And you really mean to go?" resumed Biddulph.

"I have told you once," said Kin-Fo.

"You are aware, I presume, that Craig and Fry will have to go with you?"

"As you please; I only warn you that they will have to travel pretty fast."

"Go they must," repeated Biddulph, "they shall be ready when you please."

Returning to the yamen, Kin-Fo immediately set about the necessary preparations for departure. His announcement to Soon that he would have to accompany him was a grievous annoyance to the valet, who hated nothing so much as being hurried and bustled about: but he had too much regard for his pigtail to venture either upon remonstrance or objection.

In a very short time Craig and Fry, with true American promptness, presented themselves, and announced that they were ready to start.

"In what direction—" began Craig.

"Are we to go?" continued Fry.

"To Nanking first, and then to the deuce," said Kin-Fo sharply.

The spies exchanged a smile, and having satisfied themselves that Kin-Fo would not start until towards evening they went away to say a few words to Biddulph, and to change their clothes for Chinese costumes, which would attract less attention. In good time, with bags at their sides, and revolvers in their waistbands, they returned to the yamen.

It was getting dusk when, under as little observation as possible, they proceeded to the harbour in the American quarter, and embarked on board one of the steamers that run between Shang-Hai and Nanking, a voyage that with a favourable tide rarely takes more than twelve hours.

But short as was the passage, Craig and Fry were cautious not to overlook any detail that might ensure the safety of the life they had under their care. They made it their first concern to scrutinize all the other passengers they had lived long enough in the locality of Shang-Hai to be familiar with the bland and benevolent features of Wang, and did not rest until they had made certain that he had neither preceded them nor followed them on board. But when all these external matters had been attended to

they devoted all their watchfulness to the personal welfare of their charge. They ascertained the strength of every railing on which he leant ; they tested the stability of every plank on which he trod ; they kept him at a prudent distance from the engines, in case they should burst ; they remonstrated with him when he exposed himself to the chill night air ; they looked to the port-holes of his cabin to ascertain that they were properly closed ; they carried him his tea and his cake, not omitting meanwhile to reprove him most sternly for his neglect of his master ; and finally, they lay down, still undressed, at the door of the cabin, not without having provided themselves with life-belts, so that the proper resources should all be ready in case of collision, explosion, or other disaster by which the vessel might be liable to founder.

Everything, however, went well ; nothing occurred to put their alacrity to the test. Rapidly the steamer descended the Woo-Sung ; it turned into the mouth of the Yang-tse-kiang (the Blue River) ; and having passed the Island of Tsong-Ming, it left the lights of Oo-song and Lang-Chan far behind, and in good time next morning landed all its passengers on the quay of the ancient city.

It was with a definite motive that Kin-Fo on leaving Shang-Hai had, in the first instance, made his way to Nanking. He entertained an idea that former associations connected with the ancient place, once the stronghold of

the Tchang-Mao rebellion, might already have attended Wang thither. Its history was full of stirring men. Here had Rong-Sieou-Tsin, once a modest schoolmaster, but subsequently the Emperor of the Tai-Ping, held Manchow authority long time in check; here in 1851 had poisoned himself, that he might not fall into the hands of his foes; here had been proclaimed the new era of great peace;¹ hence had fled the son of the Emperor to be captured and beheaded by the Imperialists in 1864. And had not his bones been torn from the tomb and scattered as refuse amongst the brutes of the field? short, was not Nanking the scene, where, amidst the ruin, a hundred thousand of Wang's confederates, in three days, had been massacred in cold blood?

Surely, argued Kin-Fo, it is of all things most reasonable that hither should Wang return; that, seized as he was with a kind of home-sickness, he should come back to sniff afresh the once-familiar scent, and, nerved by ancient memories, he should be inspired at the present moment to go back to Shang-Hai, and fulfil the vow of blood to which he was pledged.

But, anyhow, it was as well to choose Nanking as a place beside for a first stage. If Wang should be recovered there, all well and good; at once there would be an end of every difficulty; but if not, Kin-Fo would

¹ The interpretation of Tai-Ping is "great peace"

on and on, until the time should have passed away which there was anything to fear.

On landing, Kin-Fo led his party to an hotel in one of the half-deserted quarters of the town, where the ruins of the ancient capital lay scattered round them as in a wilderness.

"I have a word to say to you," he said to his satellite. "you must remember that I am travelling now under a fictitious name. Upon no pretext am I to be called Kin-Fo ; for the present I am Ki-Nan."

"All right !" answered Soon.

"Ki-Nan," replied Craig and Fry, dividing the syllables between them.

It was not to be wondered at that Kin-Fo took every pains he could to avoid being pestered by any repetition of the annoyances to which he had been lately subjected. He took good care not to breathe a suspicion of the expectation he entertained of meeting Wang in Nanking ; he was well aware that the hint of such a probability would only throw over him a fresh network of precautions and aggravate his grievances. In the eyes of Craig and his colleague he was nothing more than a parcel of specie that had to be convoyed safely through the perils of a hostile country.

The day was spent in exploring the place. From north to south, from east to west, the decayed city was carefully

surveyed; its ancient splendour everywhere was. Kin-Fo walked rapidly; he said little, but observed not only the features of the city, but the countenances of the passers-by.

But the familiar face for which he looked was not seen. Neither on the canals, where the population throngs, nor in the streets, desolate and overgrown, was there trace of the fugitive anywhere. Kin-Fo was a proof against all fatigue. Poor Soon crawled on with lagging and unwilling steps; the men entrusted with the oversight of the wanderer found their energies sufficiently taxed, but onwards, onwards they went. They passed the ruined marble porticos and half-burnt structures that mark the site of the Imperial Palace; they passed the yamen of the Catholic missionaries who narrowly escaped being massacred amidst the horrors of the rebellion in 1870; they passed the gun-factory built with the indestructible bricks of the old Porcelain Tower; they passed, after many wanderings, out of the east gate and found themselves in an open country.

Kin-Fo paused to look about him. As he left the city he found himself in a long avenue bordered on either side by colossal granite figures of animals. Proceeding along the avenue, he reached a small temple at its extremity; behind which was a mound so high that it might be called a hill. The mound was a tomb; beneath

Rong-oo, the Emperor-Priest, who five centuries back had contested the burden of a foreign yoke. The idea could not be repressed. Had not Wang, before he dipped his hand once more in human blood, been moved to make a pilgrimage to this very sepulchre? Kin-Fo felt that he was about to encounter him in the very midst of the associations of the fallen dynasty.

Yet, no ; the place was all deserted ; the temple was empty. There was no guardian now but the line of figures that made the avenue ; no living form in sight.

Kin-Fo was retiring. Suddenly upon the temple door he caught sight of the letters, obviously quite freshly carved :

W., K. F.

No mistaking these ; they meant Wang and Kin-Fo, or they meant nothing.

"Wang has been here, perhaps is here now," said Kin-Fo to himself. He searched, searched anxiously and earnestly, but searched in vain.

There was no alternative but to retire at last. Soon could scarce drag his weary limbs. The Americans were glad enough to be once more at the hotel and at rest.

Next morning they all left Nanking.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCOMOTION UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THE Celestials might well be puzzled by the stranger who now for a time pursued a hurried way among them. He was a traveller knowing not to-day where to-morrow would find him. He went to hotels, but tarried only for a few hours. He made his way to restaurants, but only to take the hastiest of meals. He was lavish with his money, but he spent it only to expedite his progress.

Manifestly he was not a merchant on a business tour ; as clearly he was not a mandarin charged with some urgent mission ; he was not an artist in search of the beauties of nature ; neither was he a *savant* hunting out ancient documents from the religious houses ; he was not a student on his way to the pagoda of examiners to get a degree ; not a Buddhist priest on his round of inspection of the altars consecrated at the roots of the holy banyan ; and not a pilgrim making his way to pay his vows upon one of the

five sacred mountains. Ki-Nan, the traveller, remained everywhere a mystery.

The client of the Centenarian seemed to have no design but to keep up a perpetual locomotion. Accompanied by Craig and Fry, who were ever on the alert, and followed by Soon, who was ever disgusted at the exertion he was called upon to make, he pushed rapidly onwards with the double object of escaping, and yet of seeking the indiscoverable Wang. On the one hand he was endeavouring to find a distraction from his own perplexities, on the other he was trying to evade the danger that threatened him, by keeping incessantly in motion, on the principle that a bird on the wing is harder to hit than a bird on a bush.

From Nanking they proceeded by one of the fast American steamboats, that, like floating hotels, convey passengers up the Blue River, and, after a run of sixty hours, landed at Han-Kow, at the confluence of the Yangtse-Kiang and its important affluent the Han-Kiang. They had scarcely noticed, far less admired, the fantastic rock, "the little orphan," which stands solitary in the middle of the stream, and is crowned by a temple constantly served by Buddhist priests.

At Han Kow Kin-Fo consented to rest for half a day. Ruins, utterly irreparable, in many places, were the tokens

¹ In the south of China rivers are distinguished by the termination "Kiang;" in the north by "Ho."

of the violence of the old Tai-ping, but neither in the commercial town itself, which is a mere annex to the prefecture of Han-Yang-Foo on the right bank, nor in Woo-Chang-Foo, the capital of the province of Hou-Pe, on the left, was there to be found any trace of Wang. Nor was there anywhere a repetition of the mysterious letters that had caught Kin-Fo's eye on the tomb at Nanking.

If Craig and Fry had been men anxious to turn their expedition to account and to gain much intimate acquaintance either with Chinese places or Chinese customs, they would have been very grievously disappointed, as the celerity of all their proceedings barely allowed the opportunity for making the briefest note. It must be owned, however, that as they were not garrulous, so they were not curious. It probably did not matter much that they very rarely spoke to each other. Their thoughts were so precisely alike that any conversation between them would have been little otherwise than a monologue. They had no interest to devote to the architectural peculiarities of the place; they admired neither the broad straight streets, nor the handsome houses, nor the shady promenades of the European quarter; still less had they the discrimination to observe that double aspect of character common to the majority of Chinese cities which appear as it were dead in the centre, but alive in all their surroundings.

As the steam-boat was about to proceed up the Han-

Kiang, navigable as far as Lao-Ho-Kow, another hundred miles, he determined to take his passage on board for the rest of the way. The two men in charge were very glad of the decision, chiefly because the dangers of the river were less than those of the road, and it was a mode of travelling that secured them greater facilities for keeping an effectual watch. Soon was still better satisfied. The steam-boat life suited him exactly. He had no walking, and no exertion in the way of work, for Craig and Fry still persisted in undertaking all personal attendance upon his master; he slept all day long in a snug corner of the ship, taking, however, the most conscientious care to awake punctually at luncheon, dinner, tea, and supper, the good cooking of which he thoroughly appreciated.

In a day or so afterwards, an observable change in the ordinary food betokened that they had entered a more northerly latitude. In the place of rice, corn was served up in the form of unleavened bread, which, eaten fresh from the oven, is extremely palatable. Soon, a true southerner, was the first to miss his accustomed diet, and deplored the absence of the rice which he enjoyed, tossing it, by means of chop-sticks, into his capacious mouth. Give him his tea and his rice, and he was satisfied; after all, he cared more for them than for the fine cookery of the hotel-ship.

They had, in fact, entered the corn district, the character

of the country being more undulated, and hills were to be seen on the horizon crested with fortifications erected under the dynasty of Ming. The river ceased to be bounded by artificial banks, but flowed between its natural shores, allowing the stream to be wider, but rendering it more shallow.

At the prefecture of Yuen-Lo-Foo the steamer lay to for a few hours, close to the custom-house, to take in fuel. Kin-Fo would not go on shore. Why should he? there was nothing in the place that he cared to see; his single aim now was to bury himself in the heart of China, where if he did not come across Wang, Wang would not come across him.

Beyond Yuen-Lo-Foo lay two towns, facing each other on opposite sides of the river; one being Fan-Tcheng with a large and bustling population, the other the prefecture of Siang-Yang-Foo, the residence of the authorities, but a place much more dead than alive. The river here took an abrupt turn to the north, in the direction of Lao-Ho-Kow, where it ceased to be navigable.

From this point onwards, travelling became altogether a different matter. The "smooth rolling road" of the river was henceforth to be exchanged for the rough and ill-kept highways of the land, and the gentle gliding of the steamboat had to be surrendered for the bumping and jolting of the primitive vehicles which still seem to satisfy the

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a peculiarity to his gait that was not altogether to be attributed to the unevenness of the road.

At a later stage the mules and donkeys were dismissed and it was mounted on horses, albeit of the sorriest order; that Kin-Fo and his party entered Si-Ngan-Foo, the ancient capital of the Central Empire, and the residence of the Emperor of the Tang dynasty. Many and bare, however, were the plains they had to cross; long and severe the fatigue they had to endure before they reached this remote province of Shen-See.

The heat had been scarcely endurable. It was the month of May, and the latitude was about the same as that of southern Spain. A fine yellow dust rose in clouds from the unballasted highways, at once tainting the atmosphere with an unwholesome fog and covering the travellers from head to foot. It was the "loess" district, which presents a geological formation peculiar to the north of China, and which has been described by Léon Rousset as "neither earth nor rock, but rather stone in that transitional state in which it has not yet had time to get solid."

Nor was the personal risk they ran by any means insignificant; the police themselves are in perpetual dread of the assassin's knife; and in a region where the people are afraid to walk by night in the towns, because the ti-pao give every rascal free field for action, it may well be understood that there was no security in the open country.

CHAPTER I. THE

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have been looked for in the locality; otherwise there was every reason why he should avoid it.

The town is an important centre of business between Central Asia, Tibet and Mongolia and China. It might well detain a traveller for a time, but Kin-Fo took his departure immediately after his arrival. Continuing his route northwards, he followed the valley of the Hoey-Ho, a stream of which the waters are tinged with yellow, communicated by the loess through which it makes its way. He passed Kao-Lin-Sien and Sing-Tong-Sien and reached Hwa Choo, the scene of a terrible Mussulman insurrection in 1860. Thence afterwards by an arduous journey, sometimes by carriage, sometimes by boat, he arrived at the fortress of Tong-Konan, at the confluence of the Hoey-Ho and Hoang-Ho.

The Hoang-Ho is the renowned Yellow River. Rising in the north, it flows through the eastern provinces into the Yellow Sea, which, however, is no more yellow than the Black Sea is black or the Red Sea red. Honoured with the name of the imperial colour, it is no doubt credited with a celestial origin, but its merits are somewhat qualified by the additional appellation which it bears of "the vexation of China," a title which has been bestowed upon it on account of the destructive inundations that have ever afflicted the Imperial Canal.

An Tong Konan was not a commercial city, but a mili-

ary station, ordinarily occupied by a detachment of the Manchow Tartars, a not unimportant part of the Chinese army, Kin-Fo's companions indulged a hope that he might wait there for a few days, provided he could find a comfortable hotel; and it probably would have been so had it not been for an unlucky blunder on the part of Soon. Entirely off his guard, the stupid fellow gave his master's real name at the custom-house, forgetting altogether the assumed name of Ki-Nan. It was an act of carelessness that cost him a good piece of his pigtail, but the news he had communicated flew like wildfire. Kin-Fo had come; the man who was going to live to a hundred was actually in the town. A crowd was quickly gathered round the traveller, who forthwith took to his heels, and, followed by the inseparables, never paused in his flight until he sank exhausted in an obscure little village, nearly twenty miles from Tong-Konan, and in which he hoped at least to secure his incognito.

The discomfiture which Soon had brought upon himself by his unwary slip was very considerable; his master had been so annoyed by his servant's mistake that he had snipped off a very much larger piece of the pigtail than he had intended, and the fragment that remained to the culprit made him an object of ridicule to everybody in the place; the very boys in the streets pursued and hooted him. It may well be imagined

that poor Soon longed heartily for an end to such a journey !

But where could the end be looked for ? Was not Kin-Fo resolved to carry out the purpose he had announced to Mr. Biddulph, and to keep going "straight ahead" ?

In the retired little place in which refuge had been found there were neither horses, donkeys, carriages, nor mule-chairs ; and yet it was necessary at once to proceed. The prospect before them seemed to allow no alternative but to walk. This was not at all according to Kin-Fo's taste, for however determined he might be to go forward, it had never entered into his calculation to go far on foot. It is not to be denied that he displayed very little philosophy on the occasion ; he fretted, he fumed, he blamed those about him ; he blamed the world, although he might have known that he had only himself to blame ; he sighed after the past, in which he had nothing to disturb him ; he declared that, if troubles and annoyances were necessary to make a man appreciate comforts, he had surely had troubles and annoyances enough for a lifetime. And what had he not witnessed ? Had he not seen men without a sapec in the world going on their way perfectly happy ? Had he not seen labourers toiling on merry and gay over their furrows in the fields ? Had he not seen the artisans plying their tools and singing the merriest of songs ? Perhaps after all, it was work that was wanted to give genuine

happiness to existence. At any rate, he came to the conclusion that his own was a hard and bitter lot.

Meanwhile Craig and Fry had ransacked the village for a conveyance. They had been reduced to the very extremity of despair, when at last they managed to secure a vehicle that would just convey a single passenger; but though they found the vehicle, they were not fortunate enough to get the means for moving it.

The carriage in question was neither more nor less than an ordinary wheelbarrow of the country—the wheelbarrow of Pascal, probably invented long before his time by the discoverers of gunpowder and of the mariner's compass. In these barrows the wheel is not placed at the extremity of the shafts, but in the middle of them, working underneath the body. The truck part is thus divided into two compartments, one of which may be assigned to a passenger, the other to his luggage. The driver pushes in the ordinary way from behind, and like the driver of a Hansom cab, does not impede the front view of his fare. As an appliance that is frequently found of great service, a square sail can be hoisted on a mast, and when the wind is in a favourable quarter, the impulse thus given to locomotion is occasionally considerably greater than the most impatient traveller could desire.

Not to be hired, the wheelbarrow with all its appur-

tenances had to be purchased; and all arrangements being duly made, Kin-Fo took his place inside.

"Now then, Soon!" he said.

"Quite ready, sir!" answered Soon, taking measures for stowing himself in the vacant compartment of the barrow.

"No, no; the luggage goes there!" shouted Kin-Fo.

"And I?" asked the astounded valet.

"To the shafts, man, to the shafts!" cried his master.

"How? what? where?" stammered out the poor fellow, utterly bewildered, his legs already tottering under him like a worn-out race-horse.

"Do you hear me?" said Kin-Fo, making his first two fingers gape out and shut like a pair of scissors, a gesture which Soon understood only too well.

Without another word the servant passed the barrow yoke over his shoulders, and grasped the handles at the shaft-ends. The wind was in the right direction, and the sail was accordingly hoisted; Craig and Fry took their places on either side, and a start was made at a brisk trot.

At first Soon's rage and mortification were unbounded at finding himself thus summarily reduced to the level of a cab-horse, and he flinched at the arduous task before him; but his humiliation was qualified when he found Craig and Fry willing to take their turn at pushing, and the actual toil was so materially lightened by the action of

the southerly wind, that the work of the man in the shafts was really little more than that of a helmsman.

In this fashion, walking when he wanted to stretch his legs, and riding when he was tired, Kin-Fo pushed on towards the north. Avoiding Honan-Foo and Cafong, he followed the course of the Imperial Canal, which, until twenty years ago, when the Yellow River resumed its ancient bed, formed a highway many hundred miles in length between the tea-district and the capital. Passing through Tsinan and Ho-Kien, he entered the province of Pe-Chi-Li, and proceeded towards Peking.

On his way he passed through Tien-Tsin, a large place of some four hundred thousand inhabitants, defended by an entrenched wall and two forts. The wide harbour of this city is formed by the junction of the Pei-Ho and the Imperial Canal, and accommodates ships that bring business to the amount of some millions annually, the exports being jujubes, nenuphar-leaves, and tobacco from Tartary, with other oriental products ; the imports being of a very miscellaneous character, sandal-wood, minerals, wool, and notably calico from Lancashire.

Interesting, however, as was the place, Kin-Fo had no intention of stopping there ; he neither spared time to visit the renowned Pagoda of Infernal Punishment, nor did he take a single stroll along the animated "Street of Lanterns ;" he did not take a meal at the celebrated

restaurant of "Harmony and Friendship," kept by the Mussulman Leon-Lao-Ki, whose wines, in spite of Mussulman law, are in high repute ; and he declined the ceremony of presenting his red card at the palace of Li-Tchong-Tang, since 1870 Viceroy of the Province, member of the Privy Council, and of the High Council of the Empire, and who wears the yellow robe, and bears the title of Fei-Tze-Chao-Pao.

None of these things had any attraction for Kin-Fo, who hurried on without pausing. He passed along the quays, where salt was piled up high, sack over sack ; he crossed the suburbs, the English and American quarters, the race-course ; he made his way onwards through vineyards and market-gardens, rich in their supplies of fruit and vegetables ; again he reached the open country with its fields of sorghum, barley, and sesame, traversing the open plains where hares, partridges, quails in thousands fell victims to the sparrow-hawk and falcon.

There was now before them a long paved road of nearly sixty miles, bordered on one side by many varieties of trees, fringed on the other by the tall rushes that overhang the river. It would bring them straight to Peking ; but they halted on the way at Tong-Choo, Kin-Fo none the worse for his undignified journey, Craig and Fry fresh as when they started, Soon limping and dusty, but most of all concerned at the diminution

of his pigtail, reduced to the measurement of but a few inches.

It was now the 19th of June. There were yet six days of suspense. Hitherto, however, there was no trace of Wang. Where could he be?

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXCITING CHASE.

WHEN Kin-Fo in his wheelbarrow reached Tong-Choo, about ten miles short of Peking, he announced his intention of staying there until after the period of his contract with Wang had expired.

"In a town of four hundred thousand people," he said, "I ought to be safe ; but Soon must take care to remember that he is in the service of Ki-Nan, a merchant from the province of Shen-See."

Soon protested that he was not very likely to forget his instructions a second time ; his former blunder had entailed too much labour on him for him to repeat it, and he hoped Kin-Fo ("Ki-Nan," interposed Craig and Fry with one accord) would reinstate him in his proper position, and not compel him any more to work like a horse ; he was, he declared, "dead beat," and he trusted that Kin-Fo ("Ki-Nan," again exclaimed Craig and Fry, as if they had only one tongue between them) would give him a good

eight-and-forty hours to go to sleep and recover his strength.

"Go to bed for a week, if you will," answered his master ;
"for the more you sleep, the less you will chatter."

There are plenty of hotels in the place, and Kin-Fo's next concern was to select the one which would serve his purpose best. The town is, in fact, an immense suburb of Peking, the paved road which joins the two places being bordered with an almost unbroken line of villas, farms, and paddocks, the intercourse between which is so frequent as to occasion a traffic of vehicles, horsemen, and passengers quite incessant.

Not unacquainted with the place, Kin-Fo made his way to the Tai-Wang-Mia, or "temple of the reigning princes," formerly a religious establishment, but recently converted into a hotel, and offering very desirable quarters to strangers. He engaged apartments for himself and a room for Craig and Fry close adjoining. Suitable accommodation was found for Soon, who immediately took possession and became invisible for a time.

After an hour's rest and a substantial luncheon, the three felt quite refreshed, and started off to look about them. It was suggested that they should get a local newspaper, just to see whether it contained any information that concerned themselves ; accordingly, with Kin-Fo in the middle, carefully guarded as usual, they passed along the narrow

streets, allowing no one to come unnecessarily near them. The paper, the *Official Gazette*, was duly obtained at the office down by the harbour, but beyond the advertisement still offering the reward of two thousand dollars for the discovery of Wang, it contained nothing of any personal interest.

"Not found yet," said Kin-Fo ; "where can he be ?"

"Do you really suppose he has any intention of abiding by the terms of his contract ?" asked Craig and Fry.

"Why should I question it ?" replied Kin-Fo ; "he knows nothing whatever of my change of circumstances, and consequently does not suspect any change of mind on my part ; for the next six days there is no reason why my life should be in less danger than ever."

"You must exercise special caution," they said.

"How so ?" inquired Kin-Fo.

Craig and Fry united in representing that there were three distinct lines of action open to him ; he might shut himself up and decline on any pretext to leave the private room in the hotel ; he might get himself arrested, and so secure the safest of quarters inside a gaol ; or thirdly, he might give out that he was dead, and not return to life again until the danger was overpast.

Neither of the proposals commended itself at all to Kin-Fo ; without a moment's hesitation he rejected them all, knowing well enough that Wang, if he were destined

fulfil his undertaking, would with equal ease penetrate the hotel, the prison, or the tomb.

"No," said he ; " I shall enjoy my liberty."

Craig and Fry looked doubtful, and were about to remonstrate.

"I shall do as I choose, gentlemen," he added in the most decided tone ; "the two hundred thousand dollars which you are sent to protect must remain at stake."

"We must do our duty by the office," they said.

"And I shall do my duty to myself in my own way. Don't forget that my interest is many times larger than yours. However, take my advice, and keep your eyes open ; do your best to protect me, and trust me to do what I can to protect myself."

There was no more to be said or done ; they could only resolve to use all possible vigilance, quite aware that for the next few days the task assigned them was at its crisis.

As Tong-Choo is one of the most ancient cities of the Celestial Empire, so it has grown into being one of the most populous. Situated upon an arm of the Pei-Ho that has been converted into a canal, close to its junction with another canal connecting it with Peking, it forms the centre of a large traffic. The travellers could not fail to be struck, not only with the bustling crowds upon the quay, but with the immense number of sampans and trading-junks lying in the harbour.

The very presence of a crowd gave Craig and Fry a certain feeling of security. According to their conjectures Wang would perpetrate his deed, if he could, in solitude, and leaving the document on the body he had slain, would provide that there should be every appearance of the victim having committed suicide. Coming, therefore, to the conclusion that there was nothing to fear in the public thoroughfares of a crowded city, they merely scrutinized the faces of the passers-by, expecting nothing of importance to occur.

All at once Kin-Fo came to a standstill. He listened and listened again. He was not mistaken. A lot of boys were playing antics in the streets, and were shouting out his own name. The sound startled him; he looked confused; his guardians pressed closer to his side. Was it possible he had been recognized? There was no appearance of that. It was clear at once that he was not himself an object of attraction. But the name was repeated again and again, "Kin-Fo! Kin-Fo!"

He waited quietly, curious to know the meaning of the commotion.

A crowd of men, women, and children was collecting round an itinerant singer, and applauding him vehemently, even before he commenced his performance.

As soon as he found himself surrounded by an audience sufficiently large to satisfy him, he drew from his pocket a

packet of gaily painted leaflets, and began shouting in a stentorian voice,—

“The five watches of a centenarian! The five watches of a centenarian!”

Here then was the explanation of the concourse. The strolling singer was hawking about the popular song of the day of which Kin-Fo was himself the burden. Craig and Fry tried to draw him out of the way, but he was not to be moved from the spot; he had never heard the song, and made up his mind to hear it now; nobody knew him, he argued, and stay he would.

After a few preliminary grimaces the vocalist commenced,—

“Dawneth the first watch; o’er Shang-Hai
The pale young moon sheds soften’d ray;
A willow-sprout,
Just budding out,
Kin-Fo is twenty now!”

“Dawneth the second; clear and fair,
The moon lights up the yamen there;
Rolling in wealth,
With friends, with health,
Kin-Fo is forty now!”

The singer altered his expression, making himself look older after each stanza. The crowd applauded rapturously.

"Dawneth the third watch ; beaming bright
The moon displays her fullest light ;
But autumn sere
Must soon appear :
Kin-Fo is sixty now !

"Dawneth the fourth watch ; in the west
The waning moon proceeds to rest ;
A shrivell'd shrimp,
Pucker'd and limp,
Kin-Fo is eighty now !

"Dawneth the fifth watch ; chill and drear,
The moon is dark, no stars appear,
Ready to die,
Without a sigh,
Kin-Fo's a hundred now !

"Breaketh the morn ; King Ien complains,
Kin-Fo's too old for his domains ;
From heaven shut out,
Still roams about
For ever poor Kin-Fo !"

The song over, the applause grew perfectly deafening and the audience proceeded to show their satisfaction by purchasing scores of copies at three sapecks apiece.

Kin-Fo saw no reason why he too should not buy a copy. Taking several small coins from his pocket, he was about handing them to the singer, when the sight of a face in the crowd startled him, and he gave a loud exclamation of surprise. The two men by his side grasped him

securely, and seemed to suspect he had received the fatal blow.

"Wang!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Wang! where?" asked Craig.

"Where?" repeated Fry.

Kin-Fo was not mistaken. Wang was not only there, but had recognized Kin-Fo. Instead, however, of rushing towards him to do a deed of violence, he turned round abruptly, dashed through the crowd, and started off with all his speed. Evidently the surprise was mutual.

Not an instant did Kin-Fo hesitate, but set off in pursuit, the two attendants keeping close behind.

Again and again he shouted, but in vain.

"Wang! Wang!" he called out, "I am all right now; my property is all safe. Wang! Wang, I want you!"

Craig and Fry tried hard to make him hear, but he was much too far ahead to understand their meaning.

Rushing off the quay, and along the side of the canal, he went at such a pace that those who were giving chase failed to gain upon him in the least.

Some five or six Chinese and two tipaos at first began running behind, evidently supposing that they were after a thief trying to escape; but they quickly swelled into a crowd; the name of Wang soon caught the ear of the multitude; the very man for whom the large reward had so long been offered; the excitement at once grew intense;

would not have been possible for them thus to enter the province of Pe-Chi-Li ; the road was blocked by fugitives of another character. It was here, on the 21st of September, 1860, that, repulsed by the French forces, the army of San-Ko-Li-Tsin, uncle of the Emperor, made a stand against the Manchow Tartars, in spite of the daring enterprises ordered by their fatalism, were hewn down by European artillery.

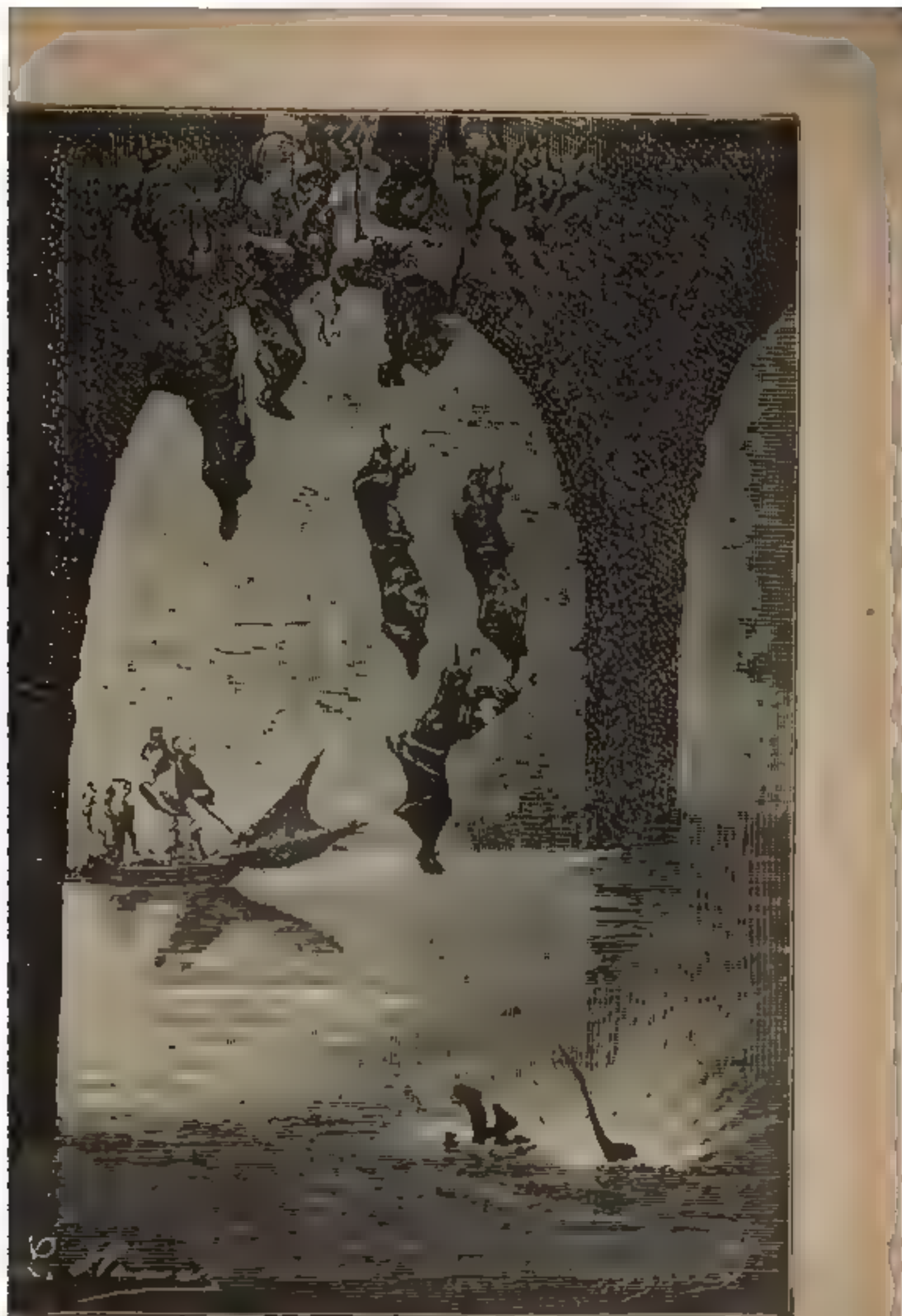
But the bridge, although its statues still bore traces of the war, was free for passage now. Wang, only too conscious that his footsteps were faltering, and that his strength was failing, cast another rapid glance at his pursuers ; in an interval, a moment ago some twenty paces, was now more than ten. He, for his part, could almost feel the grasp upon him ; they, for their part, need not waste breath in shouting ; they should make him their captive in another minute. The chase was over.

Not at all. Never was expectation more bitterly disappointed. The next moment Wang was on the parapet of the bridge ; the next, he was under the waters of the Pei-Ho.

Staggered for the instant, Kin-Fo's resolution was not taken.

"We must have him yet !" he cried, and flung himself down into the stream.

"Two hundred thousand dollars in the water !"



ALL-TOO'S resolution was soon taken.

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claimed Craig and Fry, and threw themselves down in sheer desperation.

And in the strange excitement there were several of the volunteers, who could not restrain themselves from following the example.

Yet quite in vain. They searched and searched; but to no purpose. What conclusion could be formed except that the poor philosopher had been carried down the flood, and so had perished? But the mystery still remained which none could solve, why should he put an end to his existence thus?

Wearry, bewildered, vexed, disheartened, Kin-Fo, with Craig and Fry, returned to the hotel. They dried their clothes, procured some refreshment, and summoned Soon, to whose intense annoyance they announced that in another hour they were to start for Peking.

CHAPTER XIV.

PEKING.

PE-CHI-LI, the most northerly of the eighteen provinces of China, is divided into nine departments. The capital of one of these departments is Chum-Kin-Fo, a "Celestial town" of the first rank, the city of Peking.

If the fragments of a Chinese puzzle could be supposed to be arranged so as to form a perfect rectangle, covering a surface of more than 135,000 acres, some idea might be gained of the mysterious Kambaloo, of which Marco Polo gave such a remarkable description towards the end of the thirteenth century, and which is the present capital of the Celestial Empire.

Peking really contains two distinct towns, separated by a wide rampart and fortified wall; one, the Chinese section, is a rectangular parallelogram; the other, the Tartar, is almost a perfect square, and is again subdivided into Hoang-Tching, the yellow town, and Tsen-Kin-Tching, the red or forbidden town.

Formerly the city had a population in the aggregate of more than two millions, but the emigration that ensued in consequence of the extreme misery, has reduced that number to little more than a million; these are chiefly Tartars and Chinese, with whom must be reckoned about 10,000 Mussulmans, and a considerable sprinkling of Mongols and Thibetians, who form the floating population.

The Tartar city is enclosed with a fortified wall, forty to fifty feet wide, and the same in height, and faced with brick. At intervals of every two hundred yards, there is a projecting tower, and at each corner an enormous bastion, which forms a guard-room, the whole affording a magnificent promenade, fifteen miles in length. Such is the defence within which the Emperor, "the son of heaven," resides.

Within the Tartar city lies the Yellow town, covering an area of 1500 acres, and entered by eight gateways. Its chief points of interest are an enormous pyramid of coal, three hundred feet high; a handsome canal, called the "Central Sea," spanned by a marble bridge; two convents for bonzes; a pagoda for examinations; the Pci-tha-se, a religious establishment built upon a peninsula that overhangs the clear waters of the canal; the Peh-Tang, the quarters of the Catholic Missionaries; the Imperial pagoda, with its sonorous bells and bright blue tiles; the

great temple dedicated to the ancestors of the reigning dynasty ; the temple of Spirits ; the temple of the Genius of the Winds ; the temple of the Genius of the Thunderbolt ; the temple of the Discoverer of Silk ; the temple of the Ruler of Heaven ; the five pavilions of the dragons and the monastery of Eternal Rest.

In the heart of the Yellow town lies what is known as the Forbidden town. This covers an area of 180 acres, and is surrounded by a moat, crossed by seven marble bridges.

It is almost needless to say, that as the reigning dynasty is of Manchow origin, the whole of this quarter of Peking is mainly inhabited by people of the same race, the Chinese being confined to their own town on the other side of the ramparts.

The Forbidden city is surrounded by red brick walls crowned with yellow tiles. It is entered by the Gate of Great Purity, which is only opened for an Emperor or Empress. Within are the temple of the ancestors of the Tartar dynasty, with a double roof of variegated tiles ; Che and Tsi, the temples consecrated to spirits celestial and terrestrial ; the Palace of Sovereign Concord, reserved for state ceremonies and official banquets ; the Palace of Intermediate Concord, where may be seen the genealogical tables of the "Son of Heaven ;" and the Palace of Protecting Concord, of which the central hall is occupied by

Imperial throne. Then there is the pavilion of Nei-ko, where the great council of the Empire is held, under the presidency of Prince Kong, the minister of foreign affairs, and uncle to the late sovereign ;¹ the pavilion of Flowers of Literature, whither the Emperor repairs once a year to interpret the sacred books ; the pavilion of Hoan-Sin-Tien, where sacrifices are offered in honour of Confucius ; the Imperial library ; the offices of historians ; Voo-Igne-Tien, where the wooden and copper plates used for printing are carefully preserved ; and the workshops where the court garments are concocted. Then might be seen the Palace of Celestial Purity, used for the discussion of family affairs ; the Palace of the Terrestrial Element, where the young Empress was installed ; the Palace of Meditation, to which the sovereign retires when he is ill ; the three palaces where the Emperor's children were brought up ; the four palaces reserved for the widow

An anecdote of Prince Kong, related by M. T. Choutzé in his work entitled " Peking and the North of China," is worth repeating :— In 1870, the year when France was being ravaged by a bloody war, Prince Kong had occasion to visit all the foreign diplomatic representatives in China. By the Comte de Rochechouart, the French ambassador, he was informed of the disaster of Sedan, the news of which had just been received. Calling one of the officers of his suite, Prince Kong told him to take his card to the Prussian Embassy, and say that he would not call until the following day ; then, turning to the Comte de Rochechouart, he said, ' I cannot congratulate the representative of Prussia on the same day that I am offering my condolences to the representative of France.' "

and court-ladies of Hien-Fong, who died in 1861; the Tchou-Sicou-Kong, the residence of the Emperor's wives; the Palace of Proffered Favours, where the court-ladies hold their official receptions; the Palace of General Tranquillity, a strange name to be applied to a school for the children of the superior officers; the Palace of Purification and Fasting; and the Palace of the Purity of Jade, occupied by the princes of the blood-royal. There were the temples dedicated to departed ancestors, to the presiding deity of the town, and another of Thibetian architecture; there were the Imperial stores and offices; the Lao-Kong-Choo, the residence of the eunuchs, of which there are no less than 5000 in the Red town; and many other palaces besides, making a total of forty-eight within the Imperial enclosure, not including the Tzen-Kooang-Ko, the Pavilion of Purple Light, on the borders of the lake of the Yellow town, where on June 19th, 1873, the Ambassadors of England, Russia, Prussia, Holland, and the United States, were admitted into the presence of the Emperor. The Wan Cheoo-Chan, too, should not be omitted from the summary. This is the Summer Palace, and is situated about five miles from Peking. It was destroyed in 1860, and among its ruins the garden of Calm and Perfect Light, the mound of the Source of Jade, and the hill of Ten Thousand Lives, can hardly be discerned.

Never did an ancient town exhibit an agglomerate of

buildings with forms so varied, and contents so rare ; never has any European capital been able to boast a nomenclature so strangely fantastic.

In the Tartar city around the Yellow town are the English, French, and Russian Embassies, the Hospital of the London Mission, the Catholic Mission-houses, and the old stables for the elephants, the sole surviving representative of which is a hundred years old, and blind with one eye. Besides these there is the clock-tower, its red roof edged with green tiles ; the temple of Confucius ; the convent of the Thousand Lamas ; the temple of Fa-qua ; the old Observatory with its great square tower ; the yamen of the Jesuits, and that of the Literates, where the examinations are held. On the east and west are triumphal arches, and two canals, called the Sea of the North and the Sea of Reeds, carpeted with blue water-lilies, flow down from the Summer Palace, and join the great canal in the town. Here, too, are more palaces appropriated to the ministers of finance, ceremonies, war, public works, and foreign affairs ; and there is also a court of accounts, an astronomical tribunal, and an academy of medicine. The place is a strange medley of poverty and grandeur. On either hand of the narrow streets are lines of houses of the most meagre and miserable description, broken here and there by the stately mansion of some high dignitary, shaded by tall and handsome trees. The streets them-

selves are intolerably dusty in the summer, whilst in the winter they are little better than running streams. The thoroughfares are constantly crowded with stray dogs, Mongolian camels laden with coals, palanquins with four or eight bearers, according to the rank of the occupant, chairs, mule-carts, and carriages. The beggars are estimated by M. Choutzé as over 70,000 in number, and M. P. Arène has given his testimony that in parts of the foul and muddy streets the puddles are so deep, that it is not at all a rare occurrence for a blind vagrant to be drowned in them.

The Chinese town, or Vai-Cheng, as it is called, in some respects resembles the Tartar portion of Peking. The two most famous temples are those dedicated to heaven and to agriculture, which occupy the southern district of the town, and to these may be added the temples of the Goddess Koanine, of the Genius of the World, of Purification, of the Black Dragon, and of the Spirits of Heaven and Earth. Other points of interest are the ponds of the Gold Fish, the monastery of Fayooan-Se, and the markets and theatres.

One great artery, called the Grand Avenue, runs through the town from north to south, from the Tien gateway to that of Hoong-Ting. Crossing it at right angles is another still longer street, running from the Cha-Cooa gateway on the east, to the Cooan-Tsu gateway on the west. This is the Cha-Cooa Avenue, and about a hundred yards from

its intersection with the Grand Avenue, was the residence of the lady whom Kin-Fo hoped to make his wife.

It will be remembered that a few days after the arrival of the letter announcing his first reverse of fortune, the young widow had received another informing her that affairs had changed, and that the seventh moon would not pass away before her "beloved elder brother" should have returned to her. Since that date, the 17th of May, she had never received another word. Several times she had written to Shang-Hai, but Kin-Fo was absent on his mad-cap journey, and of course her letter remained unanswered. Her uneasiness may be more easily imagined than described when the 19th of June arrived, and still no news. All through those long weary days La-oo had never left her house; her anxiety became more and more intense, and old mother Nan, who seemed to grow, if possible, more disagreeable than ever, was not at all a cheering companion for her solitude.

Although the religion of Lao-Tse is the oldest religion in China (having been promulgated 500 years before the Christian era), and, although that of Confucius, almost contemporary with it, is professed by the Emperor, the literates, and the chief mandarins, yet Buddhism, or the religion of Fo, attracts the largest number of believers. Its votaries, in China and elsewhere, form the largest

religious body in the world, and number as many as 300,000,000 people.

The Buddhists are divided into two distinct sects, the one served by bonzes, who wear grey robes and red caps, the other by lamas, who are clad from head to foot in yellow.

La-oo was a Buddhist of the former sect, and consequently a frequent visitor to the temple of Koan-Ti-Miao, dedicated to the goddess Koanine. There, prostrate on the temple floor, she would burn her offerings of little perfumed sticks, and pour forth her supplications for her lover's welfare.

To-day she had a kind of presentiment that some danger was pending over him, and accordingly determined to go and intercede with the goddess in his behalf. Summoning mother Nan, she ordered her to call a sedan-chair from the corner of the Grand Avenue. The old woman made no reply, but with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders shuffled away to obey her mistress's commands.

While she was gone, the young widow cast a melancholy glance at the phonograph, now for so many days silent and unused.

"At any rate," she said to herself, "he shall know that I have never forgotten him ; my thoughts shall be registered to repeat to him on his return."

And setting the cylinder in motion, La-oo uttered aloud

the most tender and loving phrases that her heart could dictate. Her monologue was interrupted by Nan, who, entering abruptly, announced that the chair was at the door, at the same time taking occasion to add that she should have thought that her mistress would have been better at home.

Her remonstrance had no effect; La-oo left her to grumble by herself, and taking her seat in the sedan, ordered the bearers to take her to the Koan-Ti-Miao.

The way to the temple was direct enough, being only straight up the Grand Avenue as far as the Tien gateway, but the progress thither was a matter of no small difficulty. It was the most populous part of the capital, and this was just the busiest time of the day. The noise and bustle were immense, and the booths of the itinerant dealers who lined the road gave the avenue the aspect of being one great fair. Public orators, readers, fortune-tellers, photographers, and caricaturists, who ridiculed the mandarins, all joined their voices to the general hubbub. At one time a pompous funeral sorely impeded the traffic; at another a wedding procession, not so gay as the funeral perhaps, but causing a similar block in the street. A crowd would be assembled before some magistrate's yamen, where a suppliant was beating the drum as the signal that he was demanding the intervention of justice. On the "Leo-Ping" stone a criminal was kneeling ready for the

bastonade, closely guarded by policemen with the Manchow caps with red tassels, carrying their short pike and a couple of sabres all in the same sheath. Farther on might be seen some refractory Chinamen on their way to chastisement tied together by their pigtails. Farther on again, a poor wretch was hobbling along with his left hand and right foot thrust through two holes bored in a plank, then was seen a thief, confined in a wooden box, from which only his head protruded, an object for public charity, and after him would come some other criminals yoked together by the cangue like so many oxen.

All these resorted to the more crowded thoroughfares in the hope of gaining a harvest from the passers-by, to the disadvantage of the regular mendicants of all sorts, maimed, lame, paralytic, and blind, or with a thousand other infirmities either real or pretended, who infest the cities of the Empire of Flowers.

The sedan-chair advanced but slowly, the traffic rather increasing than diminishing as it approached the outer rampart. At last the bearers stopped within a bastion that defended the gateway close to the temple of Koanine. La-oo alighted and entered the temple. She first knelt, and then prostrated herself before the statue of the goddess. Then rising she made her way to an apparatus that was known as a "praying-mill." It was a kind of windlass with eight branches, each bearing a scroll inscribed with sacred

sentences. A bonze was in attendance, ready to superintend the devotions and receive the offerings of believers. La-oo handed the minister of Buddha several taels, and placing her left hand on her heart, began to turn the handle of the machine gently with her right. Probably she did not work hard enough for her prayers to be successful, for the bonze with an encouraging look said, "Faster! faster!"

La-oo wound on for nearly a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the bonze informed her that her supplications had been favourably received. After prostrating herself again before the image of the goddess, she left the temple, and, re-entering her chair, prepared to return home.

But just as she turned into the Grand Avenue, her bearers were roughly pushed aside. The soldiers were clearing the streets with brutal violence, the shops were all being closed by order, and the side streets were being barricaded with blue hangings under the superintendence of tipaos.

A procession had already entered the Avenue. The Emperor Koang-Sin, or as his name signifies, the "Continuation of glory," was on his way back to his Tartar city, and the central gate was to be opened to admit him. Two mounted police headed the cortège, followed in the first place by a troop of pioneers, then by a troop of piko-

bearers with staves in their shoulder-belts. Next came a group of officers of high rank carrying a great yellow umbrella, ornamented with the figure of a dragon, which is the emperor's emblem, the phoenix being that of the Empress. These were immediately followed by the palanquin borne by sixteen bearers in red robes embroidered with white roses, and waistcoats of twilled silk. The princes of the blood and other dignitaries formed fan escort to the Imperial carriage, all of them being mounted on horses with trappings of yellow silk as the sign of their exalted rank. The hangings of the palanquin, also of yellow silk, were slightly raised, exhibiting, in a half-recumbent posture, the "Son of Heaven" himself, the cousin of the late Emperor Tong-Tche, the nephew of Prince Kong. A number of extra grooms and bearers brought up the rear of the procession, which soon disappeared through the Tien gateway, much to the relief of the various merchants, beggars, and others, whose business had been so unceremoniously interrupted by its passage.

La-oo's chair was now able to proceed, and ultimately deposited her safely at the door of her own house, from which she had been absent about two hours. What a surprise the goddess Koanine had prepared for her!

Just as she alighted, a carriage covered in dust, and

drawn by two mules, drew up at the door, and Kin-Fo, followed by Craig, Fry, and Soon, stepped out.

"You, Kin-Fo! is it you? Can I believe my eyes?" exclaimed La-oo.

"It is I, my beloved little sister: did you think I was never coming!" Kin-Fo replied.

La-oo said nothing, but taking him by the hand, led him alone into her boudoir, up to the little phonograph, which had been the secret receptacle of all her troubles.

"Listen," she said, "and you shall hear that I have never ceased to think of you."

As she spoke, she touched the spring, and set the cylinder in motion. Kin-Fo heard the sound of a gentle voice repeating the words which La-oo had uttered a short time previously.

"Come back, beloved brother, come back to me! Let our hearts be united as the twin stars of the Shepherd and the Lyre. My thoughts are ever fixed on thy return. . . ."

For an instant the instrument was silent, but only for an instant. Almost immediately its sounds were heard again, this time in shrill and quavering tones:—

"As if a mistress were not bad enough in a house, I am to have a master too. Prince Ien strangle them both!"

The explanation was easy to find. Old Nan had

continued her grumbling after La-oo's departure, lit dreaming that the instrument, still in motion, was registering her unwary words.

Men-servants and maid-servants, beware of phonograph! That very day Nan received notice to quit, nor was the seventh moon allowed to expire before she was forced to turn her back upon the house.

CHAPTER XV.

A CONTRETEMPS.

EVERY obstacle to Kin-Fo's marriage with La-oo was now removed. It was true that the time allowed for Wang to fulfil his pledge had not yet expired ; but the unfortunate philosopher had fallen a victim as the result of his mysterious flight, and further danger was not to be feared from him. The 25th of June, the very day on which at one time Kin-Fo had wished to end his existence, was fixed for the wedding.

La-oo had of course been informed of the various vicissitudes which her lover had experienced since he had sent her his refusal either to make her the participator of his poverty, or to run the risk of leaving her a widow, and she was well aware of the altered circumstances that had led him once more to come and claim her as his bride. She could not restrain her tears when she heard of Wang's death. She had known the

philosopher and esteemed him, and he had moreover been her first confidant of her sentiments towards Kin-Fo.

"Poor Wang," she said, "we shall miss him at our wedding."

"Yes, poor Wang," repeated Kin-Fo; "but you must remember," he added, "that he had sworn to kill me."

La-oo shook her pretty little head.

"No, no," she said, "he would never have done that. I believe he drowned himself in the Pei-Ho, for the very purpose of evading his promise."

Kin-Fo could not but own that her hypothesis was probable. He, too, regretted the faithful companion of his youth; his memory would be long in fading from either of their hearts.

It is almost needless to say that after the catastrophe on the bridge of Palikao, Biddulph's sensational paragraphs in the newspapers were discontinued, and the name of Kin-Fo sank into oblivion almost as speedily as it had risen into notoriety. The services of Craig and Fry were no longer in such urgent requisition. It is true that they were bound to defend the interests of the Centenarian until the 30th, the date of the expiration of the policy; but there was now no demand for the same measure of unremitted vigilance. Fear of attack from Wang had passed away, and there was no probability that Kin-Fo

would lay violent hands on himself; his desire now was to live as long as possible.

But Kin-Fo did not care to give them an abrupt dismissal. If their services had not been disinterested, they had at least been conscientious, and he therefore begged them to stay over his marriage festivities, an invitation which they were very pleased to accept.

"Marriage is a kind of suicide," was Fry's jesting remark to Craig.

"It is a surrender of one's life, at all events," was Craig's reply.

Old Nan was soon replaced in La-oo's household, by a domestic of more agreeable disposition. Loo-ta-loo, an aunt of La-oo's, of mature age, had come to stay with her, and act a mother's part at the time of her marriage. She was the wife of a second-class mandarin of the fourth rank, with the blue button (formerly an Imperial reader, and member of the Academy of the Han-lin), apparently possessing every quality for performing her office in a manner worthy of the occasion.

It was Kin-Fo's intention to leave Peking immediately after his marriage, as besides his objection to residing in the vicinity of the Imperial Court, he felt anxious to see his young wife properly installed as mistress of the sumptuous yamen at Shang-Hai. Meantime he took temporary apartments in the Tien-Foo-Tang, or temple of celestial

happiness, a very comfortable hotel and restaurant near the Tien-Men rampart, between the Chinese and Tartar towns. Craig and Fry were lodged in the same quarters. Soon had returned to his duties, but although he was always grumbling, he took care first of all to assure himself that there was no phonograph at hand. The fate of old mother Nan was a warning to him to be cautious.

Kin-Fo had the pleasure of meeting two of his Canton friends in Peking—the merchant Yin-Pang, and Hooal, the literate. They of course were invited to attend the approaching ceremony, as well as several of the dignitaries and merchants with whom Kin-Fo was acquainted in the capital.

Wang's apathetic, indifferent pupil seemed at last to have become truly happy; two months' trouble and botheration seemed at last to have made him appreciate his fortunate lot; the philosopher had been right, and it was a matter for regret that he was not present to witness the truth of the theory that he had advanced.

All the time that was at his disposal was spent by Kin-Fo with the young widow. She was never so happy as when he was by her side. She cared little for the presents which he lavished upon her from the richest stores in the city. Her thoughts were of him and him alone, and over and over again she would repeat to herself the wise maxims of the famous Pan-Hoei-Pan:—

"If a woman has a husband after her own heart, she has him for all her life."

"A woman should have an unbounded respect for the man whose name she bears."

"A woman should be like a shadow and an echo in the house."

"The husband is the wife's heaven."

Meantime the preparations for the wedding, which Kin-fo wished to be very handsome, were advancing rapidly. Already the thirty pairs of embroidered slippers that are necessary for a Chinese lady's trousseau had arrived at La-oo's house, and her boudoir was crammed with confectionery, dried fruits, burnt almonds, barley sugar, syrup of aloes, oranges, ginger, and shaddocks, all in confusion with rich silks, jewels of wrought gold and precious stones, rings, bracelets, cases for the nails, bodkins for the hair, and all the charming knick-knacks that Peking jewellers so cunningly devise.

In this strange country, a young girl when she marries never has a dowry. She is literally purchased either by the husband himself, or by his relations. Although she may have no brothers, she cannot inherit any portion of her paternal fortune, unless her father makes an express declaration in her favour. Such arrangements are always completed before the marriage, and are usually negotiated by agents called "Mei-jin."

The young *fiancée* is next presented to her husband's parents. The husband himself she never sees until the wedding-day, when she is carried in a closed chair to his house. The key of the chair is handed to the bridegroom, who opens the door, and if the lady within pleases his taste, he holds out his hand to her; if not, he slams the door, and the engagement is all at an end, the girl's parents having the right to retain the purchase-money.

No preliminaries of this kind were necessary in Kin-Fo's case; he and his future wife were both free agents, and had no one to consult besides themselves. There were, however, other formalities which might not be neglected.

For three days before the wedding the inside of La-oo's house was kept brilliantly lighted throughout, and for three whole nights Loo-ta-loo, as the representative of the bride's family, had to abstain from sleep, to indicate the grief felt at parting from the *fiancée*. Had Kin-Fo's parents been living, his house would have been illuminated too, as a sign of mourning, for according to the Hao-Khieou-Chooen, "the marriage of a son ought to be regarded as an emblem of the death of the father."

There were moreover various astrological calculations not to be overlooked. The horoscopes were taken with due form, and foretold a perfect compatibility of temper between the affianced couple. The season of the year and the age of the moon were alike favourable, and it

seemed as though no marriage could possibly take place under more propitious auspices.

The appointed day arrived, and everything was ready for the great event. In China there is no formal contract made in the presence of a bonze or lama, nor even before a civil magistrate, and it was arranged that the bride should be conducted with great pomp to the hotel of Celestial Happiness at eight o'clock in the evening.

At seven o'clock Kin-Fo, attended by Craig and Fry, waited to receive his friends at the door of his apartment. The invitations dispensed to them had been inscribed in microscopic characters on red paper, and ran thus:—

“Kin-Fo of Shang-Hai presents his humble respects to —, and humbly begs him to assist at the humble ceremony of his marriage.”

The guests thus invited all arrived. They had come to do honour to the bridegroom, and to take part in the magnificent banquet prepared for the men, whilst the ladies would feast apart at a table specially reserved for them. Yin-Pang and Hooal the literate duly arrived amongst the rest. There were several mandarins who wore red balls as large as pigeon's eggs on the top of their official caps, indicating that they belonged to one of the three superior orders. Others wore only blue or white balls, marking them as of inferior ranks. The majority were civil officers of Chinese origin, as might be expected.

of the friends of a man who was hostile to the Tartars. All were gorgeously attired in brilliant robes, and formed a most striking assemblage.

As soon as they arrived, Kin-Fo conducted them to the reception-room, stopping twice on the way at doors which were opened by servants in gorgeous livery, and begging his guests to pass before him. His mode of addressing them was in the politest strain. He called them by their "noble names," inquired after their "noble health," and asked for information about their "noble families." No even the most scrupulous observer of etiquette could have found the slightest flaw in his manners or deportment.

Craig and Fry watched his demeanour with surprise and admiration. They watched him also for another reason. The same idea had occurred to them both ; namely, that Wang might not have perished, as they imagined, in the river. Were there not yet several hours to expire ? Perhaps, even now, he might mingle with the wedding guests and strike the fatal blow. Improbable as this was, it was not impossible, and Craig and Fry carefully scrutinized every one who entered. But the face they sought did not appear.

Meantime the bride was leaving her house in the Choo Coa Avenue, and was taking her place in a close palanquin. Although Kin-Fo had not chosen to adopt

the mandarin costume, as according to ancient legislation he had the right of doing on the occasion of his marriage, La-oo's attire was in perfect conformity with the regulations of the highest society. Her robe was of crimson brocaded silk of the richest texture; over her face hung a transparent veil formed of the most minute pearls, which seemed to flow from the rich gold diadem that encircled her forehead; whilst her long black hair was adorned with jewels and artificial flowers most tastefully arranged. There was no fear that Kin-Fo would not find her charming enough to his taste when he should open the palanquin door.

The procession started. No doubt had the ceremony been that of a funeral, the spectacle would have been still more elaborate, but as it was, it was sufficiently imposing to attract the attention of the bystanders as it passed down the Grand Avenue on its way to the Tien-Men apart. La-oo's friends and companions followed the palanquin, carrying with great ceremony the numerous articles of the trousseau. In front was a band of musicians playing on copper instruments and gongs, and close round the palanquin marched a troop of attendants bearing torches and lanterns of every hue. The bride was carefully concealed from all inquiring eyes; etiquette compelled that the first view should be reserved for her husband's sight.

Surrounded by a noisy concourse of the populace, the

cortège made its way shortly before eight o'clock to the hotel of Celestial Happiness. Kin-Fo was waiting at the decorated entrance, ready to open the door of the palanquin. He would then assist his bride to alight, and conduct her to a special apartment, where both together they would make their salutations to the four quarters of the heavens. Then they would proceed to the nuptial banquet, the bride first making four genuflexions before her husband, he in his turn making two to her. This done, they would spill two or three drops of wine as a libation, and would offer an oblation of food to the interceding spirits, and as a final consecration to their union, a goblet of wine would be handed to each; they would severally drink half the contents, and pouring what remained into one cup, would proceed to empty it by drinking in turns.

The bride had arrived. Kin-Fo stepped forward. The master of the ceremonies handed him a key, with which he unlocked the door of the palanquin. He held out his hand; La-oo, trembling and beautiful, descended lightly and passed through the assembled visitors, who saluted her respectfully by raising their hands to their breasts. As the bride entered the hotel a signal was given, and instantly a number of illuminated kites in the form of dragons, phoenixes, and other emblems of marriage, rose into the air; flying pigeons, with a little musical apparatus attached to their tails, filled the space overhead.

with harmonious sounds, whilst hundreds of sky-rockets shot up and descended in a golden shower.

Suddenly a distant noise was heard upon the ramparts. Mingled with the murmur of voices were heard the tones of a trumpet's blast. The noise ceased, then began again. This time the sounds were nearer; it was evident they were approaching the very street where the bridal *cortège* had arrived. Kin-Fo paused and listened; his friends stood waiting to receive the bride. Gradually the commotion reached the street; the trumpets were being blown more vigorously than ever.

"What can it be?" Kin-Fo exclaimed.

La-oo turned pale; a presentiment of the cause of the uproar made her heart beat fast. All at once the mob rushed down the street. In the midst was a herald wearing the Imperial uniform, and escorted by a detachment of ti-paos. Silence fell upon the multitude, as he proclaimed in sonorous tones,—

"The Empress dowager is dead!"

"An interdiction! an interdiction!"

Kin-Fo uttered an exclamation of rage and disappointment. Only too well he knew what an interdiction meant. It meant that during the court-mourning, which commencing from that moment would last for a period to be fixed by law, no subject would be allowed to have his head shaved, no public festivities might be held, no

THE TRIBULATIONS

Arical representations might be given, in
vice might be open, and worst of all—no
ght be celebrated!"

La-oo, though downcast, was not disconcerted.
Kin-fo's hand, she pressed it gently, and in a
rove to conceal her emotion, she said bravely:

"We must wait a little longer!"

And so the palanquin departed, bearing the
bride back to her home in the Cha-Cooz.
festivities were suspended; the tables clattered
chestra dismissed, and the guests, after
dolences with the disconsolate bridegroom
departure.

Kin-fo, with only Craig and Fry, had
deserted apartment of the hotel of Celestine.
name of bitter sarcasm to him now. At
still to be pursuing him. He dared not
infringing the Imperial edict, and the
be prolonged at the Emperor's pleasure
period. Here indeed was an occasion
of all the preceding philosophy of his
early days.

An hour later
he said had just
exclaimed with
it was Wang's

CHAPTER XVI.

OFF AGAIN.

HERE was a dilemma! It left Kin-Fo in a more critical position than ever. Wang's courage, it was true, had failed him at the last, and nothing was to be apprehended from him. But had he not deputed his commission to an avowed Tai-ping who would murder him without the least scruple? And was not that Tai-ping in possession of a document that would protect him from punishment? Moreover, had he not 50,000 dollars to gain by the transaction?

Kin-Fo stamped his foot in vexation, and muttered,—

“Enough of this business! it must be settled somehow!”

Handing Wang's letter to Craig and Fry, he asked them whether they had anything to suggest.

They inquired whether the paper he had given to Wang specified the 25th as being the limit provided for the execution of the contract.

“No; I left Wang to fill up the document with the

date at his discretion. This rascal Lao-Shen is free to act just when he pleases ; he has no stipulation about time to bind him."

"But the policy," said Craig and Fry, "expires on the 30th. He is sure to know enough to make him understand that he has nothing to gain if he delays the act an hour beyond that. No ; he will finish his business before that day, or he will leave it alone."

There was not much to be said in answer to this, but Kin-Fo paced up and down the room uneasily.

"We must find this Lao-Shen ; be he where he may, we must get at him. The letter I gave Wang must be redeemed ; at all hazards, at any cost, it must be redeemed : even if I pay the 50,000 dollars for it, I must have it."

"Of course, if you can," assented Craig.

"If I can ? I must, I will !" cried Kin-Fo, getting more and more excited ; "am I to suffer disappointment after disappointment ?"

And again he paced the room rapidly.

"I am off again !" he said, after a few minutes.

"At your service, sir," replied the men.

"I am off ! You, gentlemen, do as you please ; but I start at once."

"We attend you, of course," answered both Craig and Fry with one breath.

"As you like," Kin-Fo repeated.

"We should be failing entirely in our duty to our employers if we were to permit you to travel alone."

"Well, then," said Kin-Fo, "no time to lose."

It was not very likely that it would prove at all a difficult matter to discover Lao-Shen. He was a notorious character, and very few inquiries were enough to elicit the information that after the suppression of the rebellion in which he had taken an active part, he had retired beyond the Great Wall to the north, into the district around the gulf of Leao-Tong, an inlet of the gulf of Pe-Chi-Li. The government had not made terms with him in the same way as it had with many others of the insurgent leaders, but had winked at his retreating beyond the Imperial frontier, when he found himself at liberty to adopt the congenial profession of a highwayman. Altogether, he was a man whose qualifications for the office for which Wang had engaged him could not be disputed.

A little closer investigation soon brought it further to light that Lao-Shen had quite recently been seen in the neighbourhood of Foo-Ning, a small port on the Gulf of Leao-Tong, and thither Kin-Fo made up his mind to hasten without delay. At least he would be on the track of the man he sought.

First of all, however, he must go to La-oo and inform her of his decision. Her grief was pitiable. With tears streaming from her eyes, she besought him to keep far at

possible out of the reach of a man hired to be his assassin. Let him leave China altogether. Madness to go near Lao-Shen ; better go to the remotest corner of the earth.

As well as he could, Kin-Fo consoled her ; he explained that there was no quarter of the world where he could endure to feel that his life was at the disposal of a mercenary rascal ; it was his determination to follow the fellow up, and to find him out ; he was going to put a stop to the bargain ; he was going to get back that unlucky paper, and he should succeed ; he would soon be back again in Peking ; he would be back before the day pointed for the Court mourning came to an end. And he finished by exclaiming,—

“How fortunate for us that our marriage has been delayed this little while ! How dreadful for you, when my life hangs thus in the balance, to be my wife !”

“No, no, indeed,” answered La-oo sadly ; “if only I had been your wife, I could have claimed the right of going where you go, and being with you in every hour of danger.”

“Far better otherwise,” said Kin-Fo ; “I had rather face a thousand perils, and die a thousand deaths, than bring you into jeopardy.”

La-oo wept still more bitterly. A tear rose to the eyes of Kin-Fo himself, and saying “farewell,” he tore himself from her embrace.

The same morning saw the party back again at Tong Choo. Soon repined very sorrowfully at being again disturbed in the rest he was ever seeking; he thought himself the unluckiest of mortals. But there was no help for it.

What now should be the line of action? This was the next question to be decided. There was the choice of going by land or by water. To go by land would take them through a country which under the circumstances was especially perilous, although had they been going no farther than the Great Wall, they would have been tempted to run the risk. But the port of Foo-Ning, whither they were on their way, was far to the east, and if only a vessel could be found to convey them, they would really save time by going by sea. The passage ought only to take a few days. Kin-Fo set about inquiring, and had the satisfaction of learning that a ship on its way to Foo-Ning was at that very time lying at the mouth of the Pei-Ho, and which, if he took one of the fast river-boats down the stream there was no doubt he would be able to catch. He would be sure to find accommodation for his party on board.

Craig and Fry begged for an hour's grace; they obtained the permission, which was granted with some reluctance, and made use of the time in purchasing a great variety of apparatus for saving life in case of shipwreck; they bought old-fashioned life-belts, and unwilling to let their charge incur the slightest risk that precaution could anticipate

they bought the recently-invented floating-costume of Captain Boyton.

Every preparation was hurried on; and it was still quite early in the afternoon of the 26th, when they all went on board the "Pei-tang," one of the little river steamers that ply along the Pei-Ho. The river winds so much that the distance between Tong-Choo and the river-mouth is as nearly as possible double the length of a straight line drawn from point to point; its banks are artificial and the channel is consequently deep enough to accommodate vessels of considerable burden, so that the traffic is more important than that of the other line, which lies at a little distance almost parallel.

The swift little craft glided between the buoys that marked out the channel, beating up the yellow waters with her paddles, and filling the irrigation-canals with a gentle swell. The lofty pagoda on the outskirts of the town was soon passed, and owing to a sharp curve in the stream soon out of sight. Although subject to tide, the river had no great width; along its shores sandy downs alternated with woody thickets; the villages of Matao, He-Si-Vo, Nan-Tsai, and Yang-Tsoon had grown up upon its banks, between which pleasant hamlets nestled in prolific orchards.

Ere long Tien-Tsin came in sight. Some delay occurred in consequence of the east bridge having to be opened for

their passage, and because it was a matter of some difficulty for the steamer to thread her way through the crowd of ships that filled the harbour. The captain seemed not to have the slightest compunction in cutting deliberately through the moorings of some of the small craft that were lying at anchor, and letting them go adrift ; contributing to aggravate the confusion which, had there been a harbour-master in the place, must have fairly driven him out of his senses.

Craig and his colleague made a point throughout the passage of never stirring an inch from the place of duty. They felt a heavier responsibility now brought upon them by the change of circumstances. It was no longer from Wang, whom they knew well enough to recognize at a glance, that they had to defend their charge ; it was from Lao-Shen, a desperate Tai-ping, a man they had never seen, who might be in disguise among the passengers, ready at any moment to perpetrate his murderous act. Could they be too vigilant ? They scarcely allowed themselves time to eat ; when should they be able to find time to sleep ?

Soon was all in a flutter, but his disquietude arose from altogether a different cause ; the prospect of a sea-voyage thoroughly upset him, and, although the water in the river was perfectly smooth, the nearer the steamboat approached the gulf, the more livid did his countenance become.

"Then you have never been on the sea?" said Craig to him.

"Never," he replied.

"You don't seem to think you will like it," added Fry.

"I don't like it at all."

"You must keep your head up," said Craig.

"And your mouth shut," continued Fry.

The poor fellow looked as if he had not the least objection to keep his mouth shut, but he cast one of those lugubrious glances at the widening waters which often betray beforehand the dread of sea-sickness. He made no reply, but found a place as near the middle of the boat as he could.

By this time the character of the river-scenery had somewhat changed. The right-hand bank was considerably higher than the left, which was low and beaten by a light surf. Beyond it lay extensive fields of sorghum, maize, wheat, and millet, bearing witness to the traveller that China, with her millions to feed, cannot afford to leave an acre of her soil untilled. The land everywhere was intersected by canals for irrigation, and machines made of bamboos, resembling norias, were erected to pump up the water, and diffuse it in all directions. Here and there close to yellow-clay cottages, were some orchards that could boast of apples which would be no disgrace to the plains of Normandy. Along the shore, too, might be seen

numbers of men fishing with cormorants, the birds plunging into the water at a sign from their owner, and reappearing with a fish, which a ring round the neck prevented them from swallowing. Ducks, crows, magpies, and sparrow-hawks, startled by the snorting of the steam-boats, rose very frequently from the lanky grass.

But, although the shores were singularly quiet, the traffic on the river was enormous. Vessels of all kinds were ever running up and down the channel. There were war-junks with their batteries covered by a concave roof, some worked by a double row of oars, and some by paddle-wheels moved by hand; there were excise-junks, with two masts, decorated at the prow and stern respectively with the heads and tails of fantastic animals; merchant-junks of large tonnage, which, laden with the richest products of the country, brave the typhoons of the neighbouring seas; passenger-junks, rowed or towed according to the tide used by such as needed not to hurry; and pleasure-junks, used as yachts by mandarins, with little boats in tow.

Besides these, there were sampans of every kind, with sails of plaited rushes, literally, as their name signifies, composed of "three planks," the smallest of them being worked by women, who often had infants on their backs; occasionally, too, there were the huge wood-rafts, the produce of the wood-cutters of Manchuria, veritable floating

villages, with huts erected and gardens laid out upon their upper surface.

The villages on the banks were not numerous; there could hardly be twenty altogether between Tien-Tsin and Takoo, at the mouth of the river. Occasionally, the smoke issuing from great brick-kilns would mingle with the vapour from the Pei-tang, and for a few moments obscure the atmosphere, and towards evening some tall white masses, arranged very symmetrically, loomed through the twilight, which proved to be salt from the neighbouring mines.

In this arid and melancholy district, described by M. de Beauvoir as "all sand and salt, dust and ashes," lies the estuary of the Pei-Ho.

Before sunrise the little steamer had reached Takoo. Here were the ruins of the northern and southern forts that were taken in 1860 by the allied army of England and France, when General Collineau on the 24th of August made his grand attack, the gun-boats forcing the entrance of the river. A narrow strip, now scarcely occupied at all, was conceded to the French, and there may still be seen the monument erected over the bodies of the officers and men who fell upon that occasion.

Unable to cross the bar of the river, the Pei-tang had to land her passengers at Ta-koo. It was a town of considerable importance, and would be found capable of a

large development, if only the mandarins would permit a railway to be laid down.

The ship bound for Foo-Ning was to sail that day, so that no time would be lost. The vessel was named the "Sam-Yep;" and Kin-Fo, finding nothing to detain him on shore, hailed a sampan, and went on board at once.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON BOARD THE "SAM-YEP."

A WEEK previously an American ship, chartered by one of the Chino-Californian companies, had cast anchor in the harbour of Takoo. She was freighted at the expense of the Ting-Tong agency that had its head-quarters at the Laurel Hill Cemetery, San Francisco, where the bodies of the celestials who had died in the United States awaited their transit to their native land, where their religion ordains that they shall be interred. The vessel, which was bound for Canton, conveyed as many as 250 coffins, seventy-five of which had been disembarked at Takoo, and transferred that morning to the vessel on which Kin-Fo and his party had taken passage, to be despatched to the northern provinces. The voyage, it is true, at that season of the year, would not last more than two or three days, and no other vessel was at present going in the direction of Leao-Tong; otherwise it was not exactly the one they would have been disposed to select.

Captain Yin was a bright, loquacious little man, nearly always smiling, and a living illustration of the theory of perpetual motion. He was never still: eyes, arms, and hands seemed here, there, and everywhere, and moved as fast as his tongue. He rated and scolded his crew, but on the whole he was a capital seaman, had his vessel perfectly under his control, and was well acquainted with the coasts. The handsome sum that Kin-Fo had paid for passage-money had by no means a tendency to lower his spirits; a hundred and fifty taels¹ for a trip of sixty hours was a windfall that did not often fall to his lot.

Kin-Fo and his guardians found quarters, such as they were, in the stern of the vessel. Soon was accommodated near the bow.

After a most careful scrutiny of both captain and crew, Craig and Fry came to the conclusion that there was nothing at all suspicious in the appearance of any of them. It was quite unlikely that they were in collusion with Lao-Sher, as it was the merest chance that had brought Kin-Fo upon the junk at all. Beyond the ordinary perils of a sea voyage there was no special danger pending over their charge, and they felt justified in relaxing a little of their vigilance.

Kin-Fo felt the relief of being left more to himself. He retired to his cabin, and began to "philosophize," as he expressed it. Here was he, a man who when he was

¹ About 50/.

exempt from care amid the luxuries of his yamen, never knew what happiness was. Trouble and anxiety had wrought a transformation in his mind, and now, when once he should gain possession of the fatal letter, he thought he should know true happiness at last. That the letter would be restored to him he had no doubt whatever. It was only a question of money with Lao-Shen; he would as soon receive 50,000 dollars from Kin-Fo during his lifetime as after his death; perhaps sooner, as it would save him the trouble of going to Shang-Hai and presenting himself at the Centenarian Office, a proceeding which, however great might be the clemency of the Government, could not be without a certain amount of risk to a former rebel. The difficulty was lest the Taiping should attack him unawares. He knew nothing of Lao-Shen's movements, whilst Lao-Shen might be perfectly conversant with his, and the danger would become even more imminent when he landed in the very province where he resided. Nevertheless, Kin-Fo was hopeful, and went on to make brilliant plans for the future, in which of course the young widow at Peking played no unimportant part.

Soon's meditations, meantime, were of a very different nature. Lying prostrate in his cabin, he was paying his tribute to the malevolent deities of the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li. He could scarcely collect his thoughts sufficiently to curse his master, or Wang, or the robber Lao-Shen. Ai ai ya!

His heart was stupid, his brain was stupid, his ideas were stupid! He could think no more about his tea nor his rice. Ai ai ya! what a fool he had been to enter the service of a man who wanted to come to sea! He would give up his pigtail, he would shave his head, he would become a bonze, if only he could get back to dry land. "A yellow dog—yes, a yellow dog—was devouring his liver and his stomach. Ai ai ya!"

With a good south breeze, the "Sam-Yep" ran by the three or four miles of sandy shore that here lay from east to west. She passed Peh-Tang, at the mouth of the river of the same name, not far from the spot where the European army landed; and in due course, Shan-Tai, Tchiang-Ho at the mouth of the Tau, and Hai-Ve-Tai. This part of the gulf was almost deserted; important shipping traffic did not extend beyond a radius of twenty miles from the estuary of the Pei-Ho, and a few merchant junks on short cruises, and about a dozen fishing-boats were all that could be seen near the shore, whilst out to the line of the horizon was quite unbroken.

Observing that all the fishing-boats, even those of only five or six tons' burden, carried one or two small cannon, Craig and Fry asked Captain Yin the reason, and were told that it was for protection against pirates.

"Pirates!" exclaimed Craig. "Surely there are no pirates in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li?"

"Why not in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li as much as in all the seas of China?" rejoined the captain.

And he gave a merry laugh that displayed his two rows of fine white teeth.

"You don't seem to be much afraid of them," said Fry.

"Haven't I two guns to keep them at a distance?" said Yin.

"Are the guns loaded?" Craig inquired.

"Generally; not now."

"Why not now?" asked Fry.

"Because I have no powder on board," calmly responded the captain.

"Then what good will your guns do you?" the Americans exclaimed simultaneously.

The captain laughed again.

"If my junk were loaded to the hatchways with opium or tea," he said, "then it would be worth defending; but with its present cargo—"

He shrugged his shoulders with an expressive gesture.

"You gentlemen seem to have rather a dread of pirates," he said presently, "and yet you have no property of any value on board."

Craig and Fry informed him that they had special reasons for wishing to avoid an attack, and asked how the pirates could be aware beforehand of the nature of his

freight. Captain Yin pointed to a white flag that was fluttering half-mast high above their heads.

"Pirates know what that means," he said ; "they will not take the trouble to rob a vessel laden with coffins."

"But perhaps," insisted Craig, "they may think the white flag is only a *ruse*, and will come on board to see for themselves."

"Let them come, then," said Yin jauntily ; "they will soon have to go back the same way as they came."

Craig and Fry said no more, but they could not altogether share the captain's equanimity. A junk of three hundred tons burden, even though carrying nothing but ballast, would be no mean prize for freebooters. They could, however, do no more than quietly await the chapter of accidents, and hope for the best.

The captain, for his part, had neglected nothing that could insure a favourable voyage. Before setting sail he had sacrificed a cock to the presiding deities of the sea, and its feathers were still suspended from the foremast ; a few drops of its blood had been sprinkled on the deck, and a small cup of wine thrown overboard had completed the propitiatory offering.

But whether it was that the cock had not been sufficiently plump, or the wine had not been of the choicest vintage, somehow or other the capricious deities seemed not to have been satisfied. In the course of the day, quite

unexpectedly, for the weather was bright and clear, the junk was overtaken by a tremendous gale, an event which the keenest of mariners could not have foreseen.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and the "Sam-Yep" was preparing to double the promontory beyond which the coast-line extended in a north-easterly direction; that done, she might run straight before the wind, and Captain Yin had every reason to think that in less than twenty-four hours she would be at Foo-Ning.

As the time for arriving drew near, Kin-Fo's impatience to gain possession of the letter increased considerably. With Soon the yearning to get on shore amounted almost to frenzy. Craig and Fry remembered that in three days more their responsibilities concerning the client of the Centenarian would be at an end; at midnight on the 30th of June his policy would expire, the premium had not been renewed, and all anxiety would cease.

Just as the "Sam-Yep" reached the entrance of the Gulf of Leao-Tong the wind veered suddenly to the north-east; it subsequently changed to the north, and two hours later was blowing from the north-west. If Captain Yin had had a barometer on board, he would have noticed that the mercury had made a sudden fall, a rapid rarefaction of the air that betokened an approaching typhoon,¹ the motion of

¹ Revolving storms are called tornadoes on the east coast of Africa, and typhoons in Chinese waters. Their scientific name is cyclone.

which was lightening the atmospheric strata. Had he been acquainted with the observations of Paddington Maury, forewarned, he would have endeavoured to alter tack and steer to the north-east, in the hope of getting beyond the attraction of the tempest.

But he did not understand the use of the barometer, was ignorant of the law of cyclones. He had sacrificed his cock, and therefore was he not insured against calamity? Nevertheless, superstitious Chinaman though he was, he proved an excellent seaman on the occasion, and his instinct seemed to serve him as well as the science of a European captain.

The typhoon was not of a large extent, consequently its velocity was very great, the rotatory motion being less than sixty miles an hour. Fortunately it carried "Sam-Yep" to the east, otherwise she would have been driven on to a coast where she must inevitably have perished.

At eleven o'clock the tempest reached its height. Captain Yin was not laughing now, but he had lost none of his presence of mind. With his hand constantly on the helm, he skilfully steered the light vessel, which rose easily above the waves, and in all his orders he was ably seconded by his crew.

Kin-Fo had left his cabin, and, clinging to the bulwark, was contemplating the sea and sky. The clouds, too,



Captain Yin was not laughing now.

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shreds by the hurricane, were hurrying in masses over the surface of the water, whilst the waves, all white in the blackness of the night, seemed to be sucked up by the typhoon far above their ordinary level. He was neither surprised nor alarmed. This storm was only one of the series of misfortunes that his ill-luck had prepared for him. In this summer season other people might have made a short passage of sixty hours under favourable circumstances ; but such luck was not to be his.

Craig and Fry were much more uneasy, not for themselves, but for the interests of the Centenarian. Only let their lives be preserved until midnight on the 30th of June, and the conscientious agents cared not what became of themselves or their charge afterwards.

As for Soon, to his mind the junk was in no greater danger now than she had been ever since he came on board. Stormy or calm, it was all alike to him. Ai ai ya ! The passengers down in the hold had the best of it ; they felt neither rolling nor pitching ; he wished he were among them. Ai ai ya !

For the space of three hours the junk really was in a critical position. A false turn of the helm, and she would have been lost, for the sea would have dashed over her deck ; and, although, like a pail, she could not capsize, there was every chance that she might fill and founder. Tossed as she was by the waves, it was impossible to keep

her in any constant direction, nor could any estimate be made as to the course she was taking.

By some happy chance, however, she ultimately gained without serious damage the centre of the great atmospheric disturbance that extended over an area of sixty miles. Here, like a placid lake in the midst of an angry ocean, was a tract of smooth water, two or three miles in area, where the wind was scarcely perceptible.

The junk, which had been driven thither under bare poles, was now in safety. Towards three o'clock in the morning the fury of the cyclone ceased almost as if by magic, and the angry waters round the little lake subsided into calmness. But when daylight dawned, no land was in sight. The "Sam-Yep" was the centre of a barren waste of sea and sky.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CARGO.

"WHERE are we, Captain Yin?" Kin-Fo asked after the danger was all over.

"I hardly know," replied the captain, who had quite recovered his jovial looks.

"Are we in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li?"

"Not unlikely."

"Or do you think we have been driven into the Gulf of Leao-Tong?"

"Very probably."

"Where, then, are we going to land?"

"Just where the wind takes us."

"When?"

"That's more than I can tell you."

Kin-Fo was beginning to lose his temper.

"A true Chinaman always knows his whereabouts," he said, quoting a Chinese proverb.

"Ah! that means on land, not at sea!" answered the captain, grinning from ear to ear.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Kin-Fo impatiently.

"Nor do I see anything to cry at," retorted Yin.

It might be true that there was nothing really alarming in the situation, but it was quite obvious that the captain did not know where he was ; without a compass he had no means of judging in what direction his ship had been driven by the tempest, during which the wind had been blowing from such different quarters, and while, with her sails furled and her helm useless, she had been the mere plaything of the hurricane.

But whether the junk had been carried into one gulf or the other, there could be no hesitation now about the necessity of putting her head to the west ; ultimately, land must be sighted in that direction. Had it been in his power, the captain would forthwith have hoisted sail and followed the sun, which was once more shining, though only faintly ; but there was not a breath of wind ; the typhoon had been succeeded by a dead calm ; not a ripple played upon the smooth undulations that just lifted up the vessel and allowed her to sink again without moving her a foot forward. A heavy vapour hung over the sea, and the general aspect was in striking contrast to the commotion of the previous night. It was one of those calms locally known as "white calms."

"And how long is this going to last ?" said Kin-Fo.

"No telling," replied the captain with perfect composure "at this season of the year calms sometimes continue for weeks."

"Weeks!" repeated Kin-Fo; "do you suppose I am to stay here for weeks?"

"No help for it, my dear sir, unless by good luck we can manage to get taken in tow."

"Confound the junk! what a fool I was to be caught coming on board!"

"Will you allow me to offer you two little bits of advice? Be like other folks, and don't grumble at the weather which you can't alter; and, secondly, do as I am going to do; go to bed and get some comfortable sleep."

And with a philosophy that was worthy of Wang himself, the captain retired to his cabin, leaving only a few men on deck.

For the next quarter of an hour Kin-Fo paced backwards and forwards, drumming his fingers upon his folded arms; then, casting a glance at the desolate scene around, he made up his mind to go to his cabin, and left the deck without saying a word to Craig and Fry, who had been lounging meanwhile against the taffrail, not speaking a word to each other, but no doubt holding mutual intercourse by silent sympathy. They had heard all that passed between Kin-Fo and the captain, but to say the truth, they really were not concerned at the delay which was giving so much

annoyance to the young man ; if they were losing anything in time, they were gaining in security, for as long as Kin-Fo was on board the "Sam-Yep," was he not free from any chance of being attacked by Lao-Shen ? moreover, the period of their engagement and consequently of their responsibility was close at hand ; two days more and a whole band of Tai-pings might assail him, and it would not be their duty to risk a hair of their heads to protect him. Practical Yankees as they were, they were devoted to the client of the Centenarian so long as he represented the sum of 200,000 dollars ; they would be utterly indifferent when that interest lapsed.

Under these circumstances there was nothing to prevent them from sitting down to their luncheon with a capital appetite. The food was excellent ; they partook of the same dishes, consumed the same quantities of bread and the same number of slices of meat ; they drank Biddulph's health in the same number of glasses of wine, and afterwards smoked precisely the same number of cigarettes. If not by birth, they were Siamese twins in taste and habit.

The day passed on without incident or accident ; there was still the "woolly" sky ; still the smooth sea ; and nothing to disturb the general monotony.

Towards four o'clock in the afternoon, poor Soon made his appearance on deck. He reeled, he staggered as if he

were drunk, though probably he had never in all his life been so abstemious before.

His complexion was blue and green, verging to yellow; probably when he got on shore again it would be as usual, orange; when he was angry he would flush into crimson, and thus in a very short period his countenance would have exhibited all the colours of the rainbow.

Keeping his eyes half-closed, and not daring to look beyond the bulwarks, he stumbled up to Craig and Fry, and said,—

“Are we nearly there?”

“No,” they answered,

“Not nearly?”

“No.”

“Ai ai ya!” he moaned, and flung himself down at the foot of the mast, wriggling as if in convulsions, which made his miserable little *queue* shake like a puppy’s tail.

Earlier in the day Captain Yin had given orders, very prudently, for the hatchways to be opened that the sun might dry up the water that during the typhoon had been shipped into the hold. Craig and Fry had been promenading the deck, repeatedly pausing and looking down through the middle hatchway, until at last, prompted by curiosity, they agreed to go below.

Except just where the light was admitted from above, the hold was very dark; but after a short time the eye

grew accustomed to the obscurity, and it was quite possible to distinguish the way in which the singular cargo had been stowed.

The hold was not divided, as in most junks, into partitions, but was open from end to end, and the whole of it appropriated to this strange consignment, the crew having to find their berths forward. Piled up one upon another, and arrayed on both sides, were the seventy-five coffins bound for Foo-Ning, all fastened quite securely so as to prevent any oscillation that might imperil the ship, a passage being left along the middle, the end of which, remote from the hatchway, was sunk in gloom.

Craig and Fry walked silently and softly, as though they were treading the floor of a mausoleum. There was something of awe mingling with their curiosity. The coffins were of all sizes, a small proportion of them being costly and elaborate, the generality perfectly plain. Of the emigrants whom necessity drives across the Pacific, it is very few that make a fortune or realize a competency in the diggings of California, or in the mines of Nevada and Colorado; nearly all die as impoverished as they went out, but all, whatever their wealth or poverty, are without exception and with equal care brought back to their native land.

About ten of the coffins were made of valuable wood adorned with all the richness that Chinese fancy could

devise ; but the rest were merely four planks with ends, put together in the roughest manner and painted yellow ; every one of them bore the name and address of its tenant, and as Craig and Fry passed along they kept on reading such names as Lien-Foo of Yun-Ping-Fu, Nan-Loon of Foo-Ning, Shen-Kin of Kin-Kia, Loo-ang of Ku-Li-Koa, and remarked that there seemed no confusion ; every corpse could be conveyed to its destination to await in field, in orchard, or in plain, its ultimate interment in Chinese soil.

“ Well packed ! ” whispered Craig.

“ Well packed ! ” whispered Fry.

They spoke calmly as they would about a consignment of ordinary goods from San Francisco or New York.

Having proceeded to the farther end of the passage where it was most gloomy, they turned and looked along the avenue of that temporary cemetery towards the light ; they were on the point of returning, when a slight sound attracted their attention.

“ A rat ! ” they said.

“ I should think a rat would prefer a cargo of rice,” said Craig.

“ Or of maize,” added Fry.

The noise continued. It was like a scratching with nails or claws. It was on the starboard side, and came from about the level of their heads ; consequently from the upper tier of coffins.

The men hissed as they would to scare away a rat.

Still the scratching went on.

They listened with bated breath.

Evidently the sound came from inside one of the coffins.

"Some Chinaman buried before he was dead," said Craig.

"And just come to life again," continued Fry.

They went close up to the coffin, and laid their hands upon it; it did not admit of a doubt that there was movement within.

"This means mischief!" they muttered.

The same idea had simultaneously occurred to them both, that a new danger was threatening the client in their charge.

Raising their hands, they could feel that the lid of the coffin was being gently lifted up. With the most perfect composure they waited to see what would follow next. They did not make a movement. It was too dark for them to distinguish anything plainly, but they were not mistaken in thinking they saw a coffin lid slowly opening on the larboard side.

A whisper was next heard.

A whisper followed in reply.

"Is that you, Cono?"

"Is that you, Fa-Kien?"

"Is it to be to-night?"

“ Yes, to-night.”

“ Before the moon rises ? ”

“ Yes, in the second watch.”

“ Do the others know ? ”

“ They have all been told.”

“ I shall be glad to get out of this.”

“ Ay, so shall we all.”

“ Thirty-six hours in a coffin is no joke ! ”

“ You are right.”

“ But Lao-Shen ordered it.”

“ Hush, hush ! what’s that ? ”

The last exclamation was caused by Craig and Fry making an involuntary movement at the mention of Lao-Shen’s name ; but they did not speak nor move again.

There was a slight pause, after which the coffin-lids gently closed themselves again, and there was complete silence.

Stealthily on hands and knees, Craig and Fry made their way back through the hatchway on to the deck, and in a moment were locked in their own cabin, where they could converse without risk of being overheard.

“ Dead men who talk—” began Craig.

“ Are not dead yet,” concluded Fry.

The mere mentioning of Lao-Shen’s name under these somewhat ghastly circumstances had been enough to

reveal the whole truth. It was evident that the Tai-ping had employed some agents who had found their way on board, and it did not admit of much doubt that they had only succeeded by the connivance of the captain. The coffins had been disembarked from the American ship and had had to remain for a day or two to await the arrival of the "Sam-Yep," and during that time a number of them had been broken open, the corpses removed, and the places supplied by the confederates of Lao-Shen. How it had transpired that Kin-Fo was among the passengers of the "Sam-Yep" was a mystery they could not explain, but they recollected that they had noticed suspicious characters on board from the time of embarkation, and acknowledged that it would be a thing discreditable to themselves if, after all, the office they represented should lose the two hundred thousand dollars at stake.

They were not the men to lose their presence of mind; they were facing a grave and unexpected emergency; there was not much time in which to form their plans; the deed was to be done before the second watch; there was not much scope for deliberation; there was only one conclusion to be arrived at—before the second watch Kin-Fo must be away from the junk.

How the escape was to be made was a question more easy to ask than to answer. The only boat belonging to the ship was a cumbrous craft that it would take the

whole crew to lower to the water, and if the captain were an accomplice in the plot, the crew could not be enlisted to lend a helping hand. The project of using the boat had to be abandoned.

Seven o'clock, and the captain was still in his cabin. Was it not likely he was only waiting in solitude until the appointed time had passed, and the deed was done. The junk was floating adrift; there was no watch, why should there be? A sailor, all alone, was slumbering in the bows. If only the appliances were at hand, the opportunity for escape was complete. Had they been anxious to get away from a fire-ship, they scarcely could have been more excited. A thought struck them; there was not a moment to spare to discuss it; it must be put into execution now, at once.

Opening the door of Kin-Fo's cabin, they touched him gently; he was fast asleep; they touched him again.

"What do you want with me?" he said.

They told him as concisely as they could all the facts; he did not seem at all alarmed; he pondered a moment, and asked,—

"Why not throw the rascals overboard?"

"That is quite out of the question," they replied.

"Then are we to do nothing?" said Kin-Fo.

"Do as we tell you," answered Craig; "we have made our plans."

"Let me hear," said Kin-Fo, in some surprise.

"Take this dress; ask no questions; put it on, and be ready!"

The men opened a parcel they had brought with them. It contained four sets of the swimming apparatus just invented by Captain Boyton. They gave a set to Kin-Fo, saying,—

"We have more for ourselves, and one for Soon."

"Go and fetch Soon," he bade them.

And Soon was brought in, looking as if he were suffering from an attack of paralysis.

"You are to put this on," said his master.

But Soon was incapable of helping himself, and while he kept on moaning, "Ai ai ya," the others contrived to drag him into the waterproof attire.

Eight o'clock, and they were all equipped; they looked like four great seals just going to plunge into the frozen waters, although it must be owned that Soon was almost too flabby in his condition to be compared to so lithe a creature.

The junk continued to float in absolute stillness upon the unruffled sea; Craig and Fry opened one of the portholes of the cabin, and quietly dropped Soon down without more ado. Kin-Fo cautiously followed; Craig and Fry only stayed to make sure that they had provided them-

selves with all the necessary appurtenances, and plunged in after them.

So quiet were all their movements that no one on board was aware that four of the passengers had quitted the "Sam-Yep."

CHAPTER XIX.

AFLOAT.

CAPTAIN BOYTON'S apparatus is a gutta-percha suit; consisting of leggings, tunic, and cap. But though impervious to water, the material would not be impervious to cold, were it not that the garments are made with an outer and an inner layer between which may be admitted a certain quantity of air. This air serves the double purpose of maintaining the apparatus upon the surface of the water and preventing the chill that would otherwise ensue from long exposure.

The joints of the separate pieces of the costume are perfectly water-tight. The leggings terminate beneath the feet with heavy soles, and are clasped at the waist with a metal belt, which is made wide enough to allow free movement to the body. The jacket is fixed into the belt, and has a solid collar, to which in its turn is attached the cap, which is drawn tightly over the forehead, cheeks and chin by means of an elastic border, leaving only the eyes, mouth, and nose exposed.

Several gutta-percha tubes are attached to the jacket to admit the air, which can be regulated to any density, so that a traveller may float upright with the water up to his neck or only to his waist, or may lie horizontally upon its surface, all the time in perfect safety and with complete liberty of action.

The practical utility of the apparatus has already been proved in a way that does much credit to its inventor. To make it complete there are several other appurtenances: a waterproof bag that is slung over the shoulder, and contains various useful articles; a small pole which can be attached to the foot by a socket, and carries a small sail; and a light paddle, which may be used either as an oar or a rudder, as circumstances may require.

Thus equipped, Kin-Fo, Craig, Fry, and Soon floated off, and a very few strokes of their paddles carried them a considerable distance from the junk. The night was very dark, and even if Captain Yin or any of his men had been on deck, they would not have perceived the fugitives, and no one could have the slightest suspicion that they were escaping.

The second watch, the time mentioned by the pretended corpse, would be about the middle of the night, consequently Kin-Fo and his companions had several hours' grace during which they hoped to get a good mile to leeward of the "Sam-Yep." A very slight breeze was

beginning to ruffle the surface of the water, but not enough to make them depend on any other means except their paddles for their progress.

In a very few minutes Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry, grew accustomed to their strange equipment, and were able to manœuvre so well, that they could, without a moment's hesitation, assume any attitude or make any movement they desired. Soon for a time had to be taken in tow, but he very quickly recovered his energies, and felt far more at his ease than he had been on board the junk. All sensation of sea-sickness had left him, and the relief of finding himself floating up to his waist in the sea, instead of being subject to the pitching, tossing, and heaving of a ship, was very great.

But although he was no longer ill, he was in considerable alarm. Nothing possessed him but that he should be devoured by sharks, and he was continually drawing up his legs, as though he felt them already being snapped at. His fears, it must be owned, were not altogether without foundation.

It was a strange vicissitude to which fortune had now called Kin-Fo and his companions. On and on they went, lying almost flat upon their backs to paddle, and rising to the perpendicular when they required a rest. An hour after leaving the junk the party found themselves about half a mile distant. They came to a standstill, resting

on their paddles, and began to hold a whispered consultation.

"That rascal of a captain!" said Craig, in order to broach the subject that was of course uppermost in his mind.

"And that scoundrel Lao-Shen!" added Fry.

"Are you surprised?" said Kin-Fo; "I am never surprised at anything now."

"I cannot understand how those fellows found out that you were going to take passage on board that junk," replied Craig.

"Well, it doesn't matter much now that we are safe," said Kin-Fo composedly.

"Safe!" exclaimed Craig; "we are not safe as long as the 'Sam-Yep' is in sight."

"What is to be done, then?" inquired Kin-Fo.

"We must take some refreshment and go on again, so that we may be out of sight at daybreak."

Admitting a little more air into his apparatus, Fry allowed himself to rise till the water was about level with his waist, and then opening his bag, took out a bottle and a glass. He filled the glass with brandy, and handed it to Kin-Fo, who, without requiring any pressing, drained it to the bottom. Craig and Fry helped themselves, and Soon was not forgotten.

"How are you now?" asked Craig, when Soon had emptied his glass.

"Much better, thank you," said Soon; "but I should like something to eat."

"We will have our breakfast at daybreak, and then you shall have some tea."

Soon made a wry face.

"Cold?" he asked.

"No; hot," said Craig.

Soon's countenance brightened.

"But how will you manage that?" he inquired.

"I shall make a fire."

"Then why wait till the morning?" urged Soon.

"Why, you stupid fellow, you don't want Captain Yin and his accomplices to see our light, do you?"

"No, O no."

"Then have patience, and wait till the proper time."

The appearance of the party during this colloquy was irresistibly comical; the slight undulation of the water kept them bobbing up and down like so many corks, or like the hammers of a pianoforte when the keys are touched. Kin-Fo presently remarked that the wind was beginning to freshen.

"Let us set our sails, then," said Craig and Fry.

But just as they were preparing to erect their little masts, Soon uttered a loud cry of terror.

"Be quiet, you fool!" angrily whispered his master, "do you want us to be discovered?"

"I thought," muttered Soon, "I saw a monster—a shark—quite close to me ; I thought I felt it too."

Craig carefully examined the surface of the water, and said that it was quite a mistake on Soon's part ; no shark was there at all.

Kin-Fo laid his hand on his servant's shoulder.

"Understand, Soon, that you are not to be a coward," he said. "You are not to cry out, mind, even if your leg is snapped off."

"If you make any outcry," added Fry, "we will cut a slit in your jacket, and send you to the bottom of the sea, where you may bellow to your heart's content."

Thus adjured, the unfortunate Soon, though by no means consoled, dared not utter another word. It seemed as though his troubles were never to have an end, and he began to think that the miseries of sea-sickness were scarcely worse than the tortures of terror.

Kin-Fo had been right when he said that the wind was freshening. Even if it were only one of the slight breezes that subside at sunrise, it must be utilized to increase the distance between them and the "Sam-Yep." When Lao-Shen's people discovered that Kin-Fo was no longer in his cabin, they would assuredly begin to look about for him, and if any of them were in sight, the ship's boat would greatly facilitate their capture ; consequently it was of the utmost importance to be far away before dawn.


The wind fortunately was blowing from the east. Whether they had been carried by the hurricane into the Gulf of Leao-Tong, the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li, or even into the Yellow Sea, a westerly course must in any case take them towards the coast, where they had every chance of being picked up by some merchant vessel on its way to the mouth of the Pei-Ho, or by one of the fishing-boats plying day and night about the shore. If, on the contrary, the wind had come from the west, and the "Sam-Yep" had been driven south of Corea, Kin-Fo and his companions would have had no chance of rescue; they must either have been borne away on to the open sea, or floated ultimately on to the shores of Japan as lifeless corpses, which the dress they wore would not allow to sink.

It was now about ten o'clock. The moon would rise shortly before midnight, and there was no time to be lost. According to Craig and Fry's directions, preparations were made for hoisting sail. The process was very simple. Each gutta-percha suit had a socket attached to the sole of the right foot, which was intended to hold the short pole that served for a mast. The party first of all stretched themselves on their backs, brought their foot within reach of their hands by bending the knee, and fixed the mast in its place, having previously attached the halyard of the little sail to its extremity. At a signal from Fry and Craig, each man simultaneously pulled at his halyard, and

hoisted the upper corner of his triangular sail to the top of the mast. The halyards were then made fast to the metal waistbands, the sheets were held in the hand, and they all sailed off like a flotilla of "scaphandres," an appellation to which they had more right than the submarine workmen to whom it is often improperly applied.

In the course of ten minutes they were able to steer with perfect ease and security ; they kept equal pace with one another, and glided easily along the water like so many sea-gulls with their wings extended to the breeze. Their progress was greatly facilitated by the condition of the sea ; not a wave disturbed the long quiet undulation of its surface, so that there was no splash or surf to inconvenience them.

Two or three times, Soon, forgetting Craig and Fry's instructions, was foolish enough to turn his head, and in so doing swallowed several mouthfuls of salt water. Experience, however, soon taught him better. Still he could not overcome his dread of sharks. It was explained to him that he ran less risk in a horizontal than in a vertical position, since the formation of a shark's jaw obliges it to turn over on to its back before seizing its prey, and consequently it is difficult for it to grasp a floating object ; it was furthermore pointed out to him that these voracious brutes prefer inanimate bodies to those with any power of



motion. Soon accordingly made up his mind not to keep still for a moment, and was all the happier for his efforts.

For about an hour the "scaphandres" sailed on. A shorter time would not have sufficed to carry them out of reach of the junk, a longer would have exhausted them; already their arms were getting weary with the strain put upon them by the tension of the sails.

Craig and Fry gave the signal for stopping. Instantly the sheets were loosened, and all, with the exception of Soon, who preferred remaining on the cautious side, resumed a perpendicular position.

"Five minutes' rest, sir," said Craig to Kin-Fo.

"And another glass of brandy," said Fry.

Kin-Fo assented willingly to both propositions. A little stimulant was all they required at present; having dined shortly before leaving the junk, they could well afford to wait for food until the morning. Neither did they suffer at all from cold; the layer of air between their bodies and the water protected them from any chill, and their temperature had not abated a degree since they made their start.

Was the "Sam-Yep" still in sight? Fry carefully swept the eastern horizon with a night-glass that he drew from his bag, but no sign of her was visible against the dim background of the sky. The night was rather foggy; there were very few stars, and the planets looked almost

like nebulæ in the firmament. The waning moon, however, would not be long in rising, and would probably disperse the mist.

“The rascals are still asleep,” said Fry.

“They haven’t taken advantage of the breeze,” said Craig.

Kin-Fo, tightening his sheet, and spreading his sail to the wind, now professed himself ready to make another start, and accordingly they all resumed their course, the wind being not quite so strong as before.

As they were proceeding towards the west, they would be unable to observe the moon as she rose in the east ; her light, however, would necessarily illuminate the opposite horizon, of which it was important for them to make a careful observation. If instead of a clearly defined circle between sea and sky, the line should be broken and refract the lunar rays, they might be certain that the shore was in sight ; and as the coast was everywhere open and unbeaten by surf, a landing could be effected without danger in almost any part.

About twelve o’clock a faint light began to play upon the vapours overhead, a sign that the moon was rising above the water. Neither Kin-Fo nor his companions turned their heads. Again the breeze had freshened, and while it helped to disperse the fog, was carrying them along with considerable rapidity, so that quite a furrow

of foam followed in their wake. The atmosphere became clearer and clearer; the constellations shone out more brightly, and the moon, changing from a coppery red to a silvery white, soon illumined the whole of the surrounding space.

All at once Craig uttered a loud oath.

"The junk!" he cried.

"Down with the sails!" exclaimed Fry.

In an instant the four sails were lowered, and the mast removed from their sockets. All the party resumed an upright position, and looked behind them. There, truly, was the outline of the junk, with all sails spread about a mile away.

Captain Yin, they did not doubt, had become aware of Kin-Fo's escape, and had at once set out in pursuit. Unless the fugitives could contrive to avoid discovery on the bright surface of the water, in another quarter of an hour they would be in the hands of the captain and his accomplices.

"Heads down!" said Craig.

His order was understood. A little more air was ejected from the apparatus, and all four men sank until only their heads emerged from the waves. There they waited without a sound or a motion.

The junk was advancing rapidly, its upper sails casting great shadows on the sea. In five minutes' time it was

within half a mile of them, and they could see the sailors moving to and fro, and the captain at the helm. All at once a great shout was heard ; a crowd of men had rushed upon the deck, and were apparently attacking the crew. The uproar was terrible ; yells of rage and execration alternated with shrieks of agony and despair. Then all was still ; the clamour was hushed ; nothing was heard but a constant splash, splash, at the side of the junk, indicating that bodies were being thrown overboard.

After all, then, Captain Yin and his crew had not been in league with Lao-Shen and his troop ; the poor fellows, on the contrary, had themselves been the victims of the band of rascals who had smuggled themselves on board with no other design than that of gaining possession of the junk. The pirates had had no idea that Kin-Fo was a fellow-passenger, and were he discovered now, it was certain that neither he nor any of his companions could expect to find mercy at their hands.

The "Sam-Yep" continued her course. She was close upon them now, but by the happiest chance she cast upon them the shadow of her sails. For an instant they dived beneath the waves. When they rose again, the junk had passed, and they were safe.

A corpse that was floating by they recognized as that of Captain Yin, with a poignard in his side. For a time the ample folds of his garments sustained him upon

surface of the water. Then he sank, never to rise again.

Thus by a foul massacre had perished the genial, light-hearted commander of the "Sam-Yep."

Ten minutes later the junk had disappeared in the west, and Kin-Fo, Craig, Fry, and Soon were all alone in the waste of water.

CHAPTER XX.

A TIGER-SHARK.

IN the course of three hours day began to break, and before it was quite light the junk was out of sight. Though sailing in the same direction, the "scaphandres" had of course been unable to keep pace with her, and she was already nine or ten miles away.

All danger from that quarter was therefore at an end; nevertheless the situation was not altogether satisfactory. Far as the eye could reach there was no indication of land, nor was there a single vessel of any kind in sight; whether they were in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li or in the Yellow Sea was still uncertain.

The direction taken by the junk, however, demonstrated that sooner or later land would be found towards the west, and, as a slight breeze still ruffled the waters, it was advisable to continue sailing that way.

It was now necessary to satisfy the cravings of hunger, which, after a ten hours' fast, were very keen.

"We will make a good breakfast," said Craig and Fry.

Kin-Fo gladly assented. Soon smacked his lips with delight, and for a time quite forgot his fear of being devoured.

The waterproof bag was again in requisition. Fry produced some bread and some excellent preserved meat, and the meal, though not as elaborate in its *menu* as an ordinary Chinese repast, was nevertheless most heartily enjoyed.

The bag contained provisions enough for one more day, by which time Craig and Fry said they might all hope to be on shore. Kin-Fo asked them what ground they had for such a hope? They replied that their good luck seemed to be returning to them; they were free of the dangerous junk, and never since they had had the honour of attending Kin-Fo had they been in so secure a position as now.

"All the Tai-pings in the world, sir, could not reach you here," said Craig.

"And considering that you are equivalent to two hundred thousand dollars, you float excellently well," said Fry.

Kin-Fo smiled.

"It is all owing to you, gentlemen," he said, "that I am afloat at all. Had it not been for you, I should have had the fate of poor Captain Yin."

"And so should I," echoed Soon, gulping down a huge mouthful of bread.

"You will not be the losers for your attention," Kin-Fo continued; "I shall never forget how much I owe you."

"You owe us nothing," said Craig; "we are the servants of the Centenarian."

"And our great hope is," said Fry, "that the Centenarian will never owe anything to you."

Whatever might be their motive, Kin-Fo could not be otherwise than touched by their zealous devotion.

"We will talk about this again," said he, "when Lao-Shen has restored that unfortunate letter."

Craig and Fry smiled significantly, but made no reply.

Presently, in fun, Kin-Fo asked Soon to bring him some tea.

"All right," said Fry, before Soon had time to reply to his master's joke.

Again opening his bag, he produced a little appliance which may well be reckoned an indispensable accompaniment to the Boyton apparatus, and which serves the double purpose of a lamp and a stove. It consisted simply of a tube five or six inches in length, furnished with a tap top and bottom, the whole being inserted into a sheet of cork, like the floating thermometers used in public baths.

After placing it upon the surface of the water, Fry turned

on the taps, one with each hand, and in an instant a flame started from the extremity of the funnel, sufficiently large to diffuse a perceptible heat.

"There's your stove," said Fry.

Soon could not believe his eyes.

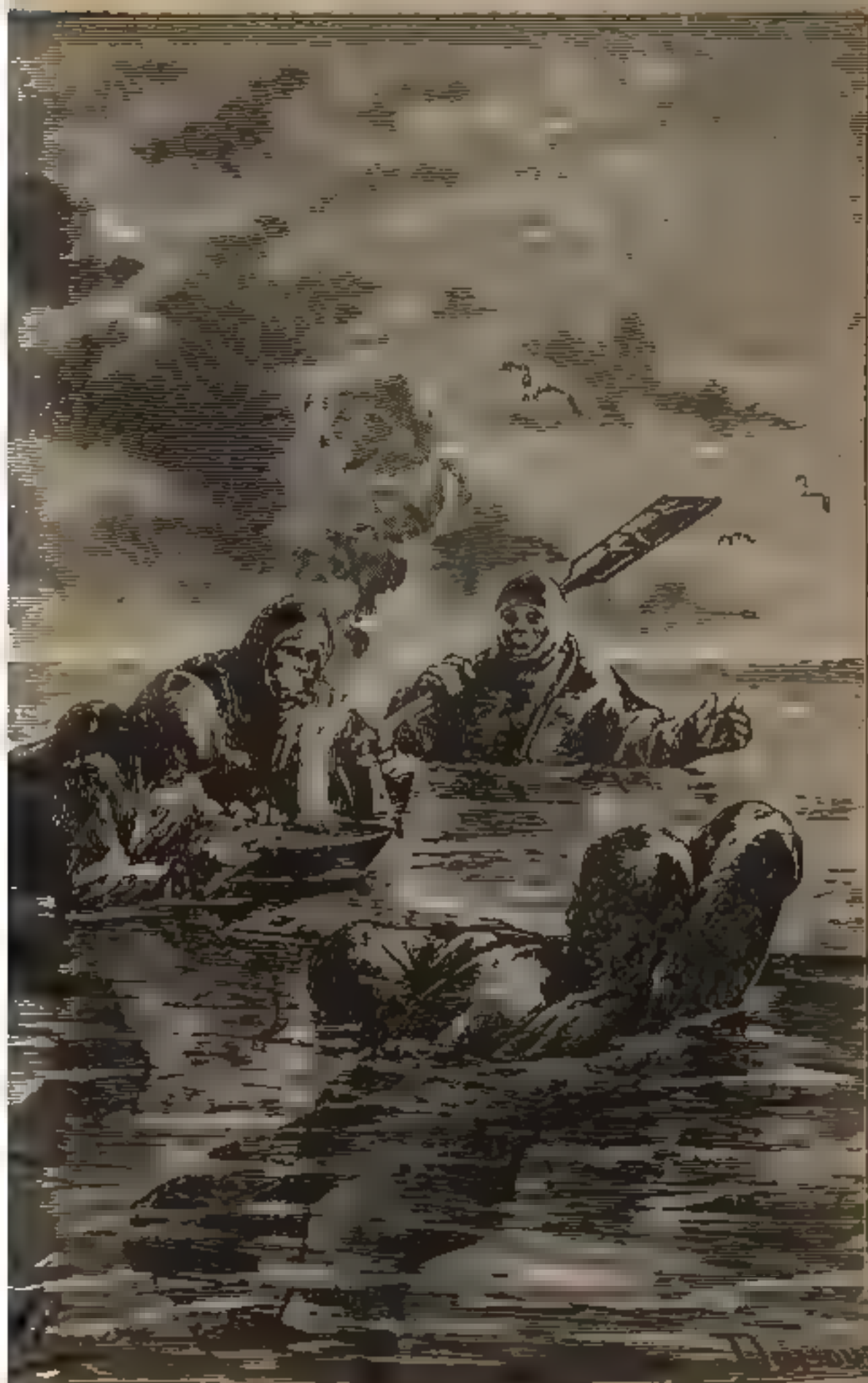
"Why, you made fire out of water!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, he made it of water and phosphuret of calcium," said Craig.

The instrument, in fact, was constructed so as to utilize a singular property of phosphuret of calcium, which in contact with water produces phosphuretted hydrogen. The gas burns spontaneously, and cannot be extinguished by either wind or rain. It is consequently employed now for lighting all the improved life-buoys, which immediately they touch the water, eject a long flame, by means of which any one who has fallen overboard by night is at once able to see the means thrown out for his rescue.¹

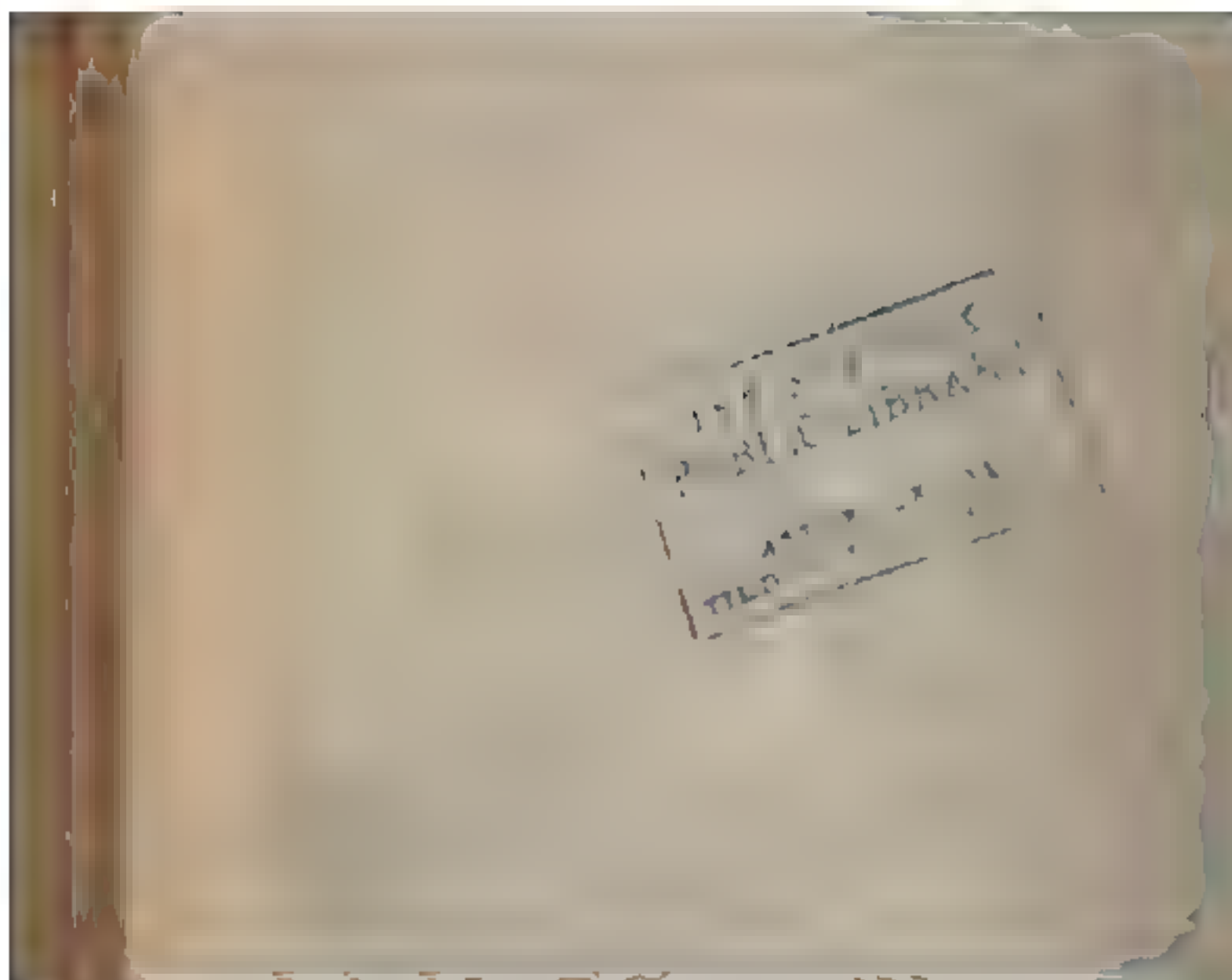
Whilst the hydrogen was burning, Craig held over it a little saucepan, containing some fresh water which he had drawn from a little keg, also carried in the bag. As soon as the water was boiling, he poured it into a teapot, in which a few pinches of tea had already been placed. The whole party then partook of the decoction, and even Ki

¹ These life-buoys, which are now in use on all men-of-war, were invented by M. Seyferth and M. Silas, recorder to the French emperor at Vienna.



"There's your stove," said Fry.

Page



Fo and Soon, although it was not brewed in Chinese fashion, had no fault to find with it. It formed, in fact, a most acceptable addition to the breakfast. All that they required now was some knowledge of their whereabouts. At no distant day a sextant and chronometer will unquestionably be added to the Boyton apparatus, and then shipwrecked mariners will no longer be at a loss to ascertain their position upon the ocean.

Thus refreshed the little party once again set sail. For hours the wind blew steadily, and they rarely had to use their paddles as rudders. The gentle gliding movement in a horizontal position had a tendency to make them sleepy; but under the circumstances sleep must not be thought of, and in order to resist it, Craig and Fry smoked cigars, after the fashion of dandies in a swimming bath.

Several times the "scaphandres" were startled by the gambols of some marine animals that put Soon into a great state of alarm; these were nothing more, however, than harmless porpoises, probably astonished at the strange beings whom they now saw for the first time invading their native element. In great herds, they darted along with the speed of arrows, their huge slimy bodies glistening like emeralds beneath the water; now and then leaping up some five or six feet into the air, and turning a somersault that displayed the remarkable suppleness of their muscles. So great was their speed, far surpassing that of the fleetest

ships, that Kin-Fo, in spite of the jerks and plunges, would fain have been taken in tow by one of them.

Towards noon the wind lulled into short puffs, and finally dropped altogether. The little sails fell idly against the masts; no longer was there any tension upon the sheets, nor any furrow of foam left behind in the wake.

"This is bad," said Craig.

"Very unfortunate," assented Fry.

They all came to a standstill. The masts were taken from the sockets, the sails struck, and each member of the party, having placed himself in an upright position, examined the horizon.

It was still deserted. Not a sail nor a trail of smoke was in sight. A scorching sun had absorbed all vapour and rarefied the air. The water would not have been cold for the travellers, even had they not been protected by their double covering of gutta-percha.

Sanguine as Craig and Fry might be as to the final issue of events, they could scarcely fail to be somewhat uneasy now. They had no means of judging how far they had sailed in the course of the last sixteen hours, and the non-appearance of any coast or passing vessel became more and more inexplicable. Still, neither they nor Kin-Fo were the men to despair as long as hope remained, and as they had provisions enough for another day, and the weather showed no symptoms of growing stormy, they deter-

mined to make good use of their paddles, and to push on. The signal for starting was given, and now on their backs, now on their faces, they persevered in their westerly course.

Progress was far from rapid. To arms unaccustomed to the work, the manipulation of the paddles was very fatiguing. Poor Soon was full of complaints; and he lagged so much behind the others that they frequently had to wait until he caught them up. His master scolded, abused, and threatened him, but all in vain; Soon knew that his pigtail was safe in his gutta-percha cap; still, the fear of being left behind sufficed to prevent him from falling very far into the rear.

Towards two o'clock some sea-gulls were observed, and although these birds are often seen far out at sea, their appearance could not but be taken as an indication that land was most probably within an accessible distance.

An hour later they all got entangled in a bed of seaweed, from which they had considerable trouble to extricate themselves; they floundered about like fish in a drag-net, and were obliged to use knives to set themselves free. The result was a delay of about half an hour, and an outlay of strength which could ill be spared.

At four o'clock, greatly exhausted, they made another halt. A fresh breeze had sprung up, but unfortunately it was from the south. As they could not trim their sails,

they were afraid to use them at all, lest they should be carried northwards and lose the headway they had made towards the west.

The halt was rather long, for, besides resting their weary limbs, they were glad to recruit themselves again with their provisions ; but the dinner was not so festive a meal as the breakfast had been. Matters did not look quite so promising now ; night was coming on ; the wind was increasing from the south, and no one knew precisely what to do.

Kin-Fo leaned in gloomy silence upon his paddle, his brows knit, but more with vexation than alarm. Soon kept on grumbling and whining, and began to sneeze as though he were attacked with influenza. Craig and Fry felt that something was expected of them, but were puzzled how to act.

By a happy chance, a solution came to their bewilderment. About five o'clock, pointing suddenly towards the south, they both exclaimed,—

“ A sail ! ”

Sure enough, about three miles to windward, a vessel was bearing down towards them, and, if she held her present course, would probably pass within a short distance of the spot where they were. Not a moment was to be lost in making their way towards her. The opportunity for deliverance must not be allowed to slip. Instantly the paddles were brought into use, and nearer and nearer drew the

vessel in the freshening breeze. It was only a fishing-smack, but it indicated that the land could not be very far distant, for the Chinese fishermen rarely venture far out to sea.

Encouraging the others to follow, Kin-Fo paddled with all his might, darting over the surface of the water like a skiff; and Soon, in his eagerness not to be left behind, worked away so hard that he fairly outstripped his master.

Half a mile more, and they would be within earshot of the boat, even if they had not already been observed. The fear was, that the fishermen, when they saw such strange creatures in the water, might take to flight. Nevertheless the attempt to reach them must be made.

The distance to be accomplished was growing considerable, when Soon, who was still in advance, gave a startling cry of terror:—

“A shark! a shark!”

And it was no false alarm. About twenty paces ahead could be seen the fins of a tiger-shark, a voracious creature peculiar to these waters, and truly worthy of its name.

“Out with your knives!” shouted Craig and Fry.

The weapons, such as they were, were quickly produced. Soon, meantime, deeming prudence the better part of valour, had beat a hasty retreat behind the rest. The shark was rapidly bearing down upon them, and for an instant his huge body, all streaked and spotted with green,

rose above the waters. It was at least sixteen feet in length, a truly hideous monster !

Turning half over on to its back, it was preparing to make a snap at Kin-Fo, who, quite calm and collected, planted his paddle on its back, and, with a vigorous thrust, sent himself flying far out of the way. Craig and Fry drew close up, ready either for attack or defence.

The shark dived for a second, and returned to the charge, its huge mouth bristling with four rows of cruel teeth. Kin-Fo attempted to repeat his former manoeuvre, but this time the paddle came in contact with the creature's jaw, and was snapped off short. Half lying on its side, the shark was just rushing once more upon its prey, when the water became blood-red. Craig and Fry, with the long blades of their American knives, had succeeded in penetrating the tough skin of the brute. The hideous jaw opened and closed again with a terrible snap. The shark seemed in agonies, and began to lash the water with its formidable tail, one stroke catching Fry on his side, and dashing him ten feet away. Craig uttered a cry of pain, as if he had received the blow himself. But Fry was not hurt ; his gutta-percha covering had protected him from injury, and he returned to the attack with redoubled vigour.

The shark turned and turned again. Kin-Fo had con-

trived to lodge the end of his broken paddle in the socket of its eye, and, at the risk of being cut in two, managed to hold it firmly there, while Craig and Fry endeavoured to pierce the creature's heart. Their attempt was evidently successful, for almost directly the shark, with one last struggle, sank beneath the bloody waters.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Craig and Fry, brandishing their knives in triumph.

"Thanks! thanks!" was all Kin-Fo could say.

"No thanks to us," said Craig; "two hundred thousand dollars was too good a mouthful for that brute!"

Fry cordially assented.

And where, meantime, was Soon? The coward, making off as fast as his paddle would carry him, had got within three cables' length of the fishing-boat; but his precaution was almost the means of his coming to grief.

The fishermen, perceiving what they supposed to be a strange animal in the water, prepared to catch it as they would a seal or a dolphin, and a long rope with a hook attached was thrown overboard. The hook caught Soon by the waist-belt, and slipping upwards, made a rent in his gutta-percha jacket the whole length of his back. Sustained now only by his inflated leggings, he rolled right over with his head in the water, and his heels in the air.

Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry had by this time reached the spot, and were calling out to the fishermen in good Chinese.

Great was the alarm of the men on finding themselves accosted by what they supposed to be "talking seals." Their first impulse was to set sail and make off, but Kin-Fo at last convinced them that he was a Chinaman like themselves, and he and the two Americans were taken on board.

Soon was then turned the right way up by means of a boat-hook, and one of the fishermen caught hold of his pigtail for the purpose of hauling him on to the boat. The pigtail came off bodily in the man's hand, and down went Soon again into the water. The fishermen, by throwing a rope round his waist, succeeded, with considerable difficulty, in getting him into the boat.

Almost before he could get rid of the quantities of sea-water that he had swallowed, Kin-Fo walked up to him, and said,—

"Then that pigtail of yours was false, after all?"

"Ah, yes, sir," replied Soon, "knowing your ways, I should never have ventured to enter your service with a real one."

The tone in which he spoke was so irresistibly comical that Kin-Fo burst into a fit of laughter, in which the others joined.

The fishermen were from Foo-Ning, and were now only about five miles from the very port to which Kin-Fo was to go.



The signal came off bodily in the main

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Towards eight o'clock that evening, they were safely landed at Foo-Ning, and divesting themselves of their Boyton apparatus, once more resumed their ordinary appearance.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESIGNATION OF OFFICE.

"Now for the Tai-ping!" were Kin-Fo's first words on the following morning, after he and his fellow-adventurers had passed a night of well-earned repose. They were now upon Lao-Shen's field of action; it was the 30th of June; matters were at a crisis. Would Kin-Fo come out conqueror in the strife? Would he have the chance of negotiating for the restoration of his letter, before Wang's ruthless agent should deal the fatal stab into his bosom?

The Americans interchanged significant glances, and echoed his words, "Now for the Tai-ping!"

The arrival of the party on the previous evening in their singular costume had caused a commotion in the little port of Foo-Ning. The object of public curiosity, they had been followed by a crowd to the door of the inn, where the money that Craig and Fry had taken the precaution to put in their bag, procured them clothes adapted for the present circumstances. Had they not been numerous

surrounded, they could hardly have failed to notice one Celestial in particular, who never left their track. Their surprise would have been considerable had they known that he was at watch all night at the inn-door, and that in the morning he was still to be found on the same spot.

Consequently there were no suspicions in their mind, when the man accosted them as they left the inn, and offered his services as a guide. He was about thirty years of age, with nothing in his appearance to indicate that he was otherwise than honest. Craig and Fry, however, cautious to the last, inquired whither he wished to guide them.

“To the Great Wall, of course,” said he. “All visitors to Foo-Ning go to see the Great Wall, and as I know the country well, I thought you might accept my services to show you the way.”

Kin-Fo interposed to inquire whether the country was safe for travelling. The guide assured him that it was perfectly secure.

“Do you know anything of a certain Lao-Shen hereabouts?” inquired Kin-Fo.

“O yes, Lao-Shen the Taiping,” replied the guide, “but there is nothing to fear from him this side of the Wall; he will not venture to set foot on Imperial territory; he and his crew are only seen in the Mongolian Provinces.”

"Where was he seen last?" asked Kin-Fo.

"In the neighbourhood of the Tchin-Tang-Ho, only a few lis from the Wall."

"And how far is it from Foo-Ning to the Tchin-Tang-Ho?"

"About fifty lis."²

"Very well; I engage you to conduct me to Lao-Shen's camp."

The man started.

"You shall be well paid," Kin-Fo added.

But the guide shook his head; he evidently did not care to pass the frontier.

"To the Great Wall," he said, "no farther. It would be at the risk of my life to go beyond."

Kin-Fo offered to pay him any sum that he pleased to demand, till at last he wrung from the man a reluctant consent to undertake the business.

Turning to the Americans, Kin-Fo told them that of course they were free to go or not, as they liked.

"Wherever you go," said Craig.

"We go also," said Fry.

The client of the Centenarian had not yet absolutely ceased to be of the value of 200,000 dollars.

The agents appeared to be perfectly well satisfied as to the trustworthiness of their guide, and to have no appre-

² About twenty-five miles.

ension of the danger which was likely to threaten beyond the great barrier that the Chinese have erected to defend themselves from the incursions of the Mongolian horde. Soon was not consulted as to whether he wished to accompany the party or not ; go he must.

Preparations were made for starting. Neither horses, mules, nor carriages were to be procured in the little town, but there were a considerable number of camels, used by the Mongolian merchants. These adventurous traders travel in caravans between Peking and Kiachta with their huge flocks of long-tailed sheep, and thus keep up a communication between Asiatic Russia and the Celestial Empire, never venturing, however, across the wide steppes, except with a large and well-armed troops. They are described by A. de Beauvoir as "a fierce, proud people, who hold the Chinese in much contempt."

Five camels accordingly were purchased, together with the small quantity of harness necessary for their equipment. A stock of provisions and a supply of weapons were also procured, and the party started under the direction of their guide.

The preparations had consumed so much time, that it was one o'clock in the afternoon before they were fairly on their road. The guide, however, made sure of reaching the Great Wall by midnight, where they would make a temporary camp, and if Kin-Fo still persisted in v

determination, they would cross the frontier on the morrow.

The country about Foo-Ning was undulated, and the road, upon which the yellow dust rose in clouds, wound through richly-cultivated fields, a sign that the travellers had not yet quitted the productive territory of the Chinese Empire.

The camels marched with a slow, measured tread, each carrying its rider comfortably ensconced between its two great humps. Soon greatly approved of this mode of travelling, and thought that in this way he should not object to journey even to the world's end. The heat, however, was very great, the hot air being refracted from the soil and producing strange mirages, like vast seas, which vanished almost as suddenly as they appeared, much to the satisfaction of Soon, to whom the prospect of another sea voyage opened visions of unmitigated horror.

Though the province was situated at the extreme limit of the empire, it was by no means deserted, the overflowing population extending even to the boundaries of the Asiatic desert. Numbers of men were working in the fields, and Tartar women, distinguished by their red and blue garments, were engaged in various agricultural pursuits. Flocks of yellow sheep, with long tails that might have filled poor Soon with envy, were grazing here and there. Black eagles hovered around, and woe to the unlu-
c

ruminant that should stray and fall into their clutches ! for these formidable birds of prey wage terrible war against all sheep, moufflons, and young antelopes, and are even used instead of hounds by the Kirghis of Central Asia.

Game started up from every quarter, and a gun need hardly have had a moment's rest ; though a true sportsman would scarcely have looked with a favourable eye at the nets, snares, and other contrivances worthy only of a poacher, with which the furrows between the wheat, millet, and maize were strewn.

On and on went Kin-Fo and his companions, through the clouds of dust, stopping neither at shady spots, nor at the isolated farms, nor at the villages which ever and anon could be distinguished in the distance by their memorial towers, erected to the memory of some hero of Buddhist legend. The camels marched according to their wont, in single file, their steps falling in regular cadence to the sound of a little red bell attached to their neck.

No conversation was possible under the circumstances. The guide, who seemed to be of a taciturn nature, always took the foremost place, and although the dense masses of dust materially narrowed his range of vision, he never hesitated which way to follow, even at cross roads, where there was no sign-post. Craig and Fry, quite satisfied as to his honesty, were free to direct all their attention to Kin-Fo. Naturally, as the time grew shorter, their anxiety

increased ; now or never was the time to bring them to face with the foe they dreaded.

Kin-Fo meanwhile was forgetting all the anxieties of the present and future in making a retrospect of the past. The unintermitted evil fortune of the last two months made him feel seriously depressed. From the day that his correspondent at San Francisco sent him the news of the loss of all his fortune, had he not passed through a period of ill-luck that was truly extraordinary ? What a contrast between his existence of late, and the time when he possessed advantages which he had not the sense to appreciate ! Would misfortune terminate with his regaining possession of the letter ? Should he at last have the tender care of the sweet La-oo to compensate him for his troubles and make him forget the difficulties by which he had been beset ? His thoughts bewildered him, and Wang, his philosopher and friend of his youth, was no longer present to comfort and advise him.

His reverie was suddenly interrupted by his camel coming so sharply in contact with that of the guide, that he was nearly thrown to the ground.

"What are you stopping for ?" he asked.

"It is eight o'clock, sir," said the conductor, "and I suppose that we halt and have our supper ; we can continue our journey afterwards."

"But it will be dark, will it not ?" objected Kin-Fo.

“There is no fear that I shall lose my way ; the Great Wall is not more than twenty li ahead, and we had better give our animals some rest.”

Kin-Fo assented to the proposal, and the whole party came to a halt. There was a small deserted hut by the side of the road, and a little stream where the camels might be watered. It was not dark, and Kin-Fo and his companions could see to spread their meal, which they afterwards ate with an excellent appetite.

Conversation did not flow rapidly. Two or three times Kin-Fo tried to get some information about Lao-Shen, but the guide generally shook his head, evidently desiring to avoid the subject. He merely repeated that Lao-Shen himself never came on this side of the Great Wall, although he added that some of his band occasionally made their appearance.

“Buddha protect us from the Tai-ping,” he concluded.

Whilst the guide was speaking, Craig and Fry were knitting their brows, looking at their watches, and holding a whispered consultation.

“Why should we not wait here quietly until to-morrow morning ?” they asked presently aloud.

“In this hut !” exclaimed the guide. “Far better to wait in the open country ; we shall run much less risk of being surprised.”

“It was arranged that we were to be at the Great Wall

to-night," said Kin-Fo, "and at the Great Wall I mean to be."

His tone was such as to brook no contradiction, and the Americans could not do otherwise than submit. Soong, though half paralyzed with fear, dared not protest.

It was now nearly nine o'clock; the meal was over, and the guide gave the signal to start. Kin-Fo prepared to mount his camel; Craig and Fry followed him.

"Are you quite determined, sir, to put yourself into Lao-Shen's hands?"

"Quite determined," said Kin-Fo; "I will have my letter at any price."

"You are running a great risk," they pleaded, "in going to the Tai-ping's camp."

"I have come too far to retreat now," said Kin-Fo, with decision; "as I told you before, you may do as you please about following me."

The guide meantime had lighted a small pocket lantern. The Americans drew near, and again looked at their watches.

"It would be much more prudent to wait till to-morrow," they again persisted.

"Nonsense!" said Kin-Fo. "Lao-Shen will be just as dangerous to-morrow or the day after as he is to-day. My decision is unalterable. Let us be off at once."

The guide had overheard the latter part of the conversa-

tion. Once or twice previously, when Craig and Fry had been trying to dissuade Kin-Fo from proceeding, an expression of dissatisfaction had passed over his countenance, and now, when he found them persisting in their remonstrance, he could not restrain a gesture of annoyance.

The motion did not escape Kin-Fo, and he was still further surprised when the guide, as he was assisting him to mount his camel, whispered in his ear,—

“Beware of those two men.”

Kin-Fo was on the point of asking him to explain himself, but the man put his finger on his lips, gave the signal for starting, and the little caravan set off on its night journey across the country.

The guide's mysterious speech had aroused an uneasy suspicion in Kin-Fo's mind; and yet he could not believe that, after two months' devoted attention, his two protectors were about to play him false. Yet why had they tried to dissuade him from paying his visit to the Tai-ping's camp? Was it not for that very purpose that they had left Peking? Was it not to their interest that Kin-Fo should regain possession of the letter that compromised his life? Truly their conduct was inexplicable.

Kin-Fo kept to himself all the perplexity which was agitating his mind. He had taken up his position behind the guide; Craig and Fry followed him closely, and for a couple of hours the journey was continued in silence.

It was close upon midnight when the guide stopped and pointed to a long black line in the north that stood out clearly against the lighter background of the sky. Behind the line several hill-tops had already caught the moonlight, although the moon herself was still below the horizon.

"The Great Wall!" he said.

"Shall we get beyond it to-night?" inquired Kin-Fo.

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"By all means, yes!"

"I must first go and examine the passage," said the guide. "Wait here till I come back."

The camels were brought to a standstill, and the guide disappeared. Craig and Fry stepped up to Kin-Fo.

"Have you been satisfied with our services, sir, since we have been commissioned to attend you?" they inquired in a breath.

"Quite satisfied."

"Then will you be kind enough to sign this paper as a testimonial to our good conduct during the time you have been under our charge?"

Kin-Fo looked with some surprise at the leaf torn from a note-book that Craig was holding out to him.

"It is a certificate which we hope to have the pleasure of exhibiting to our principal," added Fry.

"Here is my back to serve you as a desk," said Craig, *suiting the action to the word*, and stooping down.

“And here is a pen and ink with which to sign your name,” added Fry.

Kin-Fo smiled, and did as he was requested.

“But what is the meaning of all this ceremony at this time of night?” he asked.

“Because in a very few minutes your interest in the Centenarian Assurance Office will have expired,” said Craig.

“And you may kill yourself, or allow yourself to be killed, just which you please,” said Fry.

Kin-Fo stared with astonishment; the Americans were talking in the blindest of tones; but he did not at all comprehend their meaning. Presently the moon began to rise above the eastern horizon.

“There’s the moon!” exclaimed Fry.

“To-day, the 30th of June, she rises at midnight,” said Craig.

“Your policy has not been renewed,” said Fry.

“Therefore you are no longer the client of the Centenarian,” added Craig.

“Good-night, sir,” said Fry politely.

“Good-night,” echoed Craig, with equal courtesy.

And the two agents, turning their camels’ heads in the opposite direction, disappeared from view, leaving Kin-Fo in speechless amazement.

The *sound of their camels’* hoofs had scarcely died away.

when a troop of men, led on by the guide, seized upon Kin-Fo, helpless to defend himself, and captured Soon, who was rushing away in the hope of making his escape.

An instant afterwards, both master and man were dragged into the low chamber of one of the deserted bastions of the Great Wall, the door of which was at once fastened behind them.

CHAPTER XXII.

BACK TO SHANG-HAI.

THE Great Wall of China, constructed by the Emperor Tin-Chi-Hooang-Ti in the third century, is nearly 1400 miles long, and extends from its two jetties in the Gulf of Leao-Tong to the province of Kan-Soo, where it degenerates into very insignificant dimensions. It is an uninterrupted succession of double ramparts, defended by bastions fifty feet high and twenty wide ; the lower part is of granite, the upper of bricks, and it boldly follows the outline of the mountain tops on the Russo-Chinese frontier. On the Chinese side the wall is now in a very bad condition, but on the side facing Manchuria it is still well preserved, and its battlements maintained in formidable array.

Neither army nor artillery defends this line of fortification ; Russian, Tartar, Kirghis, as much as the Chinaman, is free to pass its barrier ; and the wall, moreover, fails to protect the Empire from the visitation of the fine Mongolian dust which the north wind brings down sometimes as far as the capital.

The farther end of the vestibule opened on to a stair cut in the solid wall, and leading into the heart of the mountain to a crypt beneath the temple by winding passages so complicated that no one unaccustomed to the place could have found his way.

Lighted by torches carried by the escort, the prisoners were conducted down thirty steps, then for about a hundred yards along a narrow passage, until they found themselves in a large hall, which the additional glare of more torches still left very dim. Massive pillars carved with grotesque heads of the monsters of Chinese mythology supported the low arches of the roof, which sprang from their keystones with spreading mouldings.

A low murmur that ran through the hall made Kiow aware that it was not deserted; so far from that, its recesses were filled with men, as if the entire cohort of Tai-pings had been summoned to some special ceremony.

At the extreme end of the crypt, on a wide square platform, stood a man of enormous stature; he bore the appearance of a president of some secret tribunal. Three or four attendants stood close beside him, as if at the part of his assessors, and at a sign from him they gave orders that the prisoners were to approach.

"Here is Lao-shen," said the leader, pointing to the gigantic figure on the platform.

Stepping forward with firm step, Kin-Fo in the most direct manner entered upon the business that was uppermost in his mind.

"I am Kin-Fo," he began. "Wang has been your old comrade and confederate. I gave Wang a certain paper with a certain contract. Wang has transferred that paper to you. I come to tell you that that contract is not valid now, and I demand the paper at your hands."

The Tai-ping did not stir a muscle; had he been of bronze he could not have been more rigid.

"You can demand your own price," continued Kin-Fo, and then waited for an answer.

But no answer came.

Kin-Fo went on,—

"I am ready to give you a draft on any bank you choose. I am prepared to guarantee its payment to any messenger you send. Name the sum for which you surrender the contract."

Still no answer.

Kin-Fo repeated his request more emphatically than before.

No answer.

"Five thousand taels, shall I offer?"

Still silence.

"Ten thousand?"

Lao-Shen and all around him were as mute as the statues.

Kin-Fo grew anxious and impatient.

"Do you not hear me?"

Lao Shen bowed his head gravely.

"I will give you thirty thousand taels. I will give you all you would get from the Centenarian. I must have the paper. Name, only name the price."

The Tai-Ping stood mute as before.

Wild with excitement Kin-Fo clenched his hands and dashed forwards to the platform.

"What price will you take?"

"Money will not buy that paper," at last said the Tai-ping sternly; "you have offended Buddha by despising the life that Buddha gave you; and Buddha will be avenged. Death alone can convince you of the worth of the gift of life which you have esteemed so lightly."

The voice with which this sentence of decision was uttered prohibited any reply; and even had Kin-Fo been anxious to say a word in his own defence, the opportunity was not afforded him. A signal was given, and he was forthwith seized, carried out, and thrust into a cage, the door of which was immediately locked. In spite of the most pitiable howlings, Soon was subjected to the same treatment.

"Ah, well!" said Kin-Fo to himself, when he was left to his solitude, "I suppose those who despise life deserve to die!"

Yet death was not so near as he imagined. Hours passed on and execution was delayed ; he began to speculate what terrible torture the Tai-ping might have in store for him. After a while he was conscious that his cage was being moved, and he felt that it was being placed upon some vehicle. Evidently he was to be conveyed to a distance. For nearly eight hours there was the tramp of horses, and the clatter of weapons carried by an escort, and he was tumbled and jolted about most unmercifully. Then came a halt. Shortly afterwards the cage was removed to another conveyance ; it was not long before it began rolling and pitching ; there was the noise too, of a screw, and the ill-fated tenant was aware that he was on board a steamer.

“Are they going to throw me overboard?” he wondered. “well, it will be a mercy if they spare me any worse torture!”

Forty-eight hours elapsed. Twice a day a little food was introduced into the cage by a trap-door, but he never could see the hand that brought it, and never could get reply to the questions that he asked.

He had plenty of time to think now. He had been years and years and felt no emotion ; surely he was now destined to die without emotion ; he had had enough and more than enough during the last few weeks ; he must die now, but he had the intensest longing to die in the light

of day ; he shuddered at the prospect of being cast unawares into the deep sea ; oh, that he could live, if it were only to see once more his beloved La-oo ! To see her no more ; the thought was terrible !

The voyage came to an end ; he was yet alive ; but surely his last moments must have come ; here was the crisis ; every minute was a year,—a hundred years !

To his unbounded surprise, he felt his cage carried along and deposited upon *terra firma* ; he heard a commotion outside, and in a few minutes the door was opened, he was seized, and a bandage fastened tightly over his eyes, and he was pushed violently along. Finding after a time that the steps of the men who were driving him along began to hesitate, he concluded that they had arrived at the scene of his execution, and shouted out,—

“Hear my last petition. I have but one request ; unbandage my eyes ; let me see the daylight ; let me die as a man that can face death !”

“Grant the criminal the boon he asks,” said a solemn voice, severely, in his ears ; “let the bandage be untied.

The bandage was removed

Kin-Fo quivered with amazement. Was he dreaming ? What was the meaning of all this ?

Before him was a table sumptuously spread. Five guests were smiling, as if they were expecting his arrival. Two seats were still unoccupied.

THE
BLOCKADE RUNNERS.

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JULES VERNE

THE AUTHOR.

THE
BLOCKADE RUNNERS.

BY JULES VERNE,

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THE BLOCKADE RUNNERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE "DOLPHIN."

THE Clyde was the first river whose waters were lashed into foam by a steam-boat. It was in 1812, when the steamer called the "Comet" ran between Glasgow and Greenock, at the speed of six miles an hour. Since that time more than a million of steamers or packet-boats have plied this Scotch river, and the inhabitants of Glasgow must be as familiar as any people with the wonders of steam navigation.

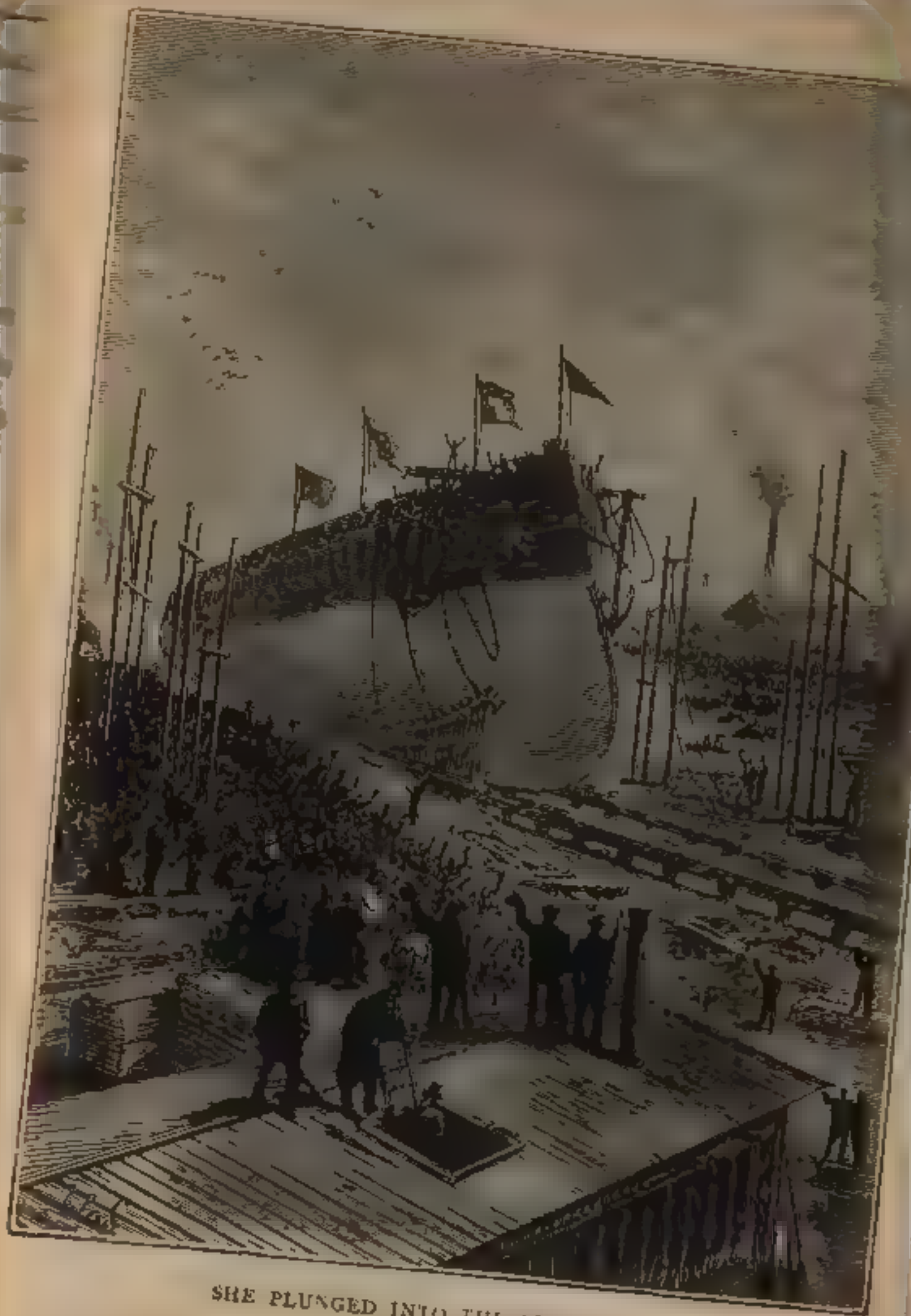
However, on the 3rd of December, 1862, an immense crowd, composed of ship-owners, merchants, manufacturers, workmen, sailors, women, and children, thronged the muddy streets of Glasgow, all going in the direction of

Kelvin Dock, the large ship-building premises belonging to Messrs. Tod and Mac Gregor. This last name especially proves that the descendants of the famous Highlanders have become manufacturers, and that they have many workmen of all the vassals of the old clan chieftains.

Kelvin Dock is situated a few minutes' walk from the town, on the right bank of the Clyde. Soon the immense timber-yards were thronged with spectators; not a part of the quay, not a wall of the wharf, not a factory roof showed an unoccupied place; the river itself was covered with craft of all descriptions, and the heights of Govan, on the left bank, swarmed with spectators.

There was, however, nothing extraordinary in the event about to take place; it was nothing but the launching of a ship, and this was an every-day affair with the people of Glasgow. Had the "Dolphin," then—for that was the name of the ship built by Messrs. Tod and Mac Gregor—some special peculiarity? To tell the truth it had none.

It was a large ship, about 1500 tons, in which everything combined to obtain superior speed. Her engines, of 500-horse power, were from the workshops of Lancefield Forge; they worked two screws, one on either side the stern-post, completely independent of each other. As to the depth of water the "Dolphin" would draw, it must be very inconsiderable; connoisseurs were not deceived, and they concluded rightly that this ship was destined for



SHE PLUNGED INTO THE CLYDE.

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shallow straits. But all these particulars could not in any way justify the eagerness of the people: taken altogether the "Dolphin" was nothing more or less than an ordinary ship. Would her launching present some mechanical difficulty to be overcome? Not any more than usual. The Clyde had received many a ship of heavier tonnage, and the launching of the "Dolphin" would take place in the usual manner.

In fact, when the water was calm, the moment the ebb-tide set in, the workmen began to operate. Their mallets kept perfect time falling on the wedges meant to raise the ship's keel: soon a shudder ran through the whole of her massive structure; although she had only been slightly raised, one could see that she shook, and then gradually began to glide down the well-greased wedges, and in a few moments she plunged into the Clyde. Her stern struck the muddy bed of the river, then she raised herself on the top of a gigantic wave, and, carried forward by her start, would have been dashed against the quay of the Govan timber-yards, if her anchors had not restrained her.

The launch had been perfectly successful, the "Dolphin" swayed quietly on the waters of the Clyde, all the spectators clapped their hands when she took possession of her natural element, and loud hurrahs arose from either bank.

But wherefore these cries and this applause? Un-

doubtedly the most eager of the spectators would have been at a loss to explain the reason of his enthusiasm. What was the cause, then, of the lively interest excited by this ship? Simply the mystery which shrouded her destination; it was not known to what kind of commerce she was to be appropriated, and in questioning different groups the diversity of opinion on this important subject was indeed astonishing.

However, the best informed, at least those who pretended to be so, agreed in saying that the steamer was going to take part in the terrible war which was then ravaging the United States of America, but more than this they did not know, and whether the "Dolphin" was a privateer, a transport ship, or an addition to the Federal marine, was what no one could tell.

"Hurrah!" cried one, affirming that the "Dolphin" had been built for the Southern States.

"Hip! hip! hip!" cried another, swearing that never had a faster boat crossed to the American coasts.

Thus its destination was unknown, and in order to obtain any reliable information one must be an intimate friend, or, at any rate, an acquaintance of Vincent Playfair and Co., of Glasgow.

A rich, powerful, intelligent house of business was that of Vincent Playfair and Co., in a social sense, an old and honourable family, descended from those tobacco lords who

built the finest quarters of the town. These clever merchants, by an act of the Union, had founded the first Glasgow warehouse for dealing in tobacco from Virginia and Maryland. Immense fortunes were realized; mills and foundries sprang up in all parts, and in a few years the prosperity of the city attained its height.

The house of Playfair remained faithful to the enterprising spirit of its ancestors, it entered into the most daring schemes, and maintained the honour of English commerce. The principal, Vincent Playfair, a man of fifty, with a temperament essentially practical and decided, although somewhat daring, was a genuine shipowner. Nothing affected him beyond commercial questions, not even the political side of the transactions, otherwise he was a perfectly loyal and honest man.

However, he could not lay claim to the idea of building and fitting up the "Dolphin;" she belonged to his nephew, James Playfair, a fine young man of thirty, the boldest skipper of the British merchant marine.

It was one day at the Tontine coffee-room under the arcades of the Town-hall, that James Playfair, after having impatiently scanned the American journal, disclosed to his uncle an adventurous scheme.

"Uncle Vincent," said he, coming to the point at once, "there are two millions of pounds to be gained in less than a month."

"And what to risk?" asked Uncle Vincent.

"A ship and a cargo."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing, except the crew and the captain, and that does not reckon for much."

"Let us see," said Uncle Vincent.

"It is all seen," replied James Playfair. "You have read the *Tribune*, the *New York Herald*, the *Times*, the *Richmond Inquirer*, the *American Review*?"

"Scores of times, nephew."

"You believe, like me, that the war of the United States will last a long time still?"

"A very long time."

"You know how much this struggle will affect the interests of England, and especially those of Glasgow?"

"And more especially still the house of Playfair and Co.," replied Uncle Vincent.

"Theirs especially," added the young Captain.

"I worry myself about it every day, James, and I cannot think without terror of the commercial disasters which this war may produce; not but that the house of Playfair is firmly established, nephew; at the same time it has correspondents which may fail. Ah! those Americans, slaveholders or abolitionists, I have no faith in them!"

If Vincent Playfair was wrong in thus speaking with

respect to the great principles of humanity, always and everywhere superior to personal interests, he was, nevertheless, right in a commercial point of view. The most important material was failing at Glasgow, the cotton famine became every day more threatening, thousands of workmen were reduced to live upon public charity. Glasgow possessed 25,000 looms, by which 625,000 yards of cotton were spun daily; that is to say, fifty millions of pounds yearly. From these numbers it may be guessed what disturbances were caused in the commercial part of the town, when the raw material failed altogether. Failures were hourly taking place, the manufactories were closed, and the workmen were dying of starvation.

It was the sight of this great misery which had put the idea of his bold enterprise into James Playfair's head.

"I will go for cotton, and will get it, cost what it may."

But as he also was a merchant as well as his uncle Vincent, he resolved to carry out his plan by way of exchange, and to make his proposition under the guise of a commercial enterprise.

"Uncle Vincent," said he, "this is my idea."

"Well, James?"

"It is simply this; we will have a ship built of superior sailing qualities and great bulk."

"That is quite possible."

"We will load her with ammunition of war, provisions, and clothes."

"Just so."

"I will take the command of this steamer, I will defy all the ships of the Federal marine for speed, and I will run the blockade of one of the southern ports."

"You must make a good bargain for your cargo with the Confederates, who will be in need of it," said his uncle.

"And I shall return laden with cotton."

"Which they will give you for nothing."

"As you say, uncle. Will it answer?"

"It will; but shall you be able to get there?"

"I shall, if I have a good ship."

"One can be made on purpose. But the crew?"

"Oh, I will find them. I do not want many men; enough to work with, that is all. It is not a question of fighting with the Federals, but distancing them."

"They shall be distanced," said uncle Vincent, in a peremptory tone; "but now, tell me, James, to what port of the American coast do you think of going?"

"Up to now, uncle, ships have run the blockade of New Orleans, Willmington, and Savannah, but I think of going straight to Charlestown; no English boat has yet been able to penetrate into the harbour, except the '*Bermuda*.' I will do like her, and if my ship draws but very

little water, I shall be able to go where the Federalists will not be able to follow."

"The fact is," said Uncle Vincent, "Charlestown is overwhelmed with cotton; they are even burning it to get rid of it."

"Yes," replied James; "besides, the town is almost invested, Beauregard is running short of provisions, and he will pay me a golden price for my cargo!"

"Well, nephew! and when will you start?"

"In six months; I must have the long winter nights to aid me."

"It shall be as you wish, nephew."

"It is settled, then, uncle?"

"Settled!"

"Shall it be kept quiet?"

"Yes; better so."

And this is how it was that five months later the steamer "Dolphin" was launched from the Kelvin Dock timber-yards, and no one knew her real destination.

CHAPTER II.

"GETTING UNDER SAIL."

THE "Dolphin" was rapidly equipped, her rigging was ready, and there was nothing to do but fit her up. She carried three schooner-masts, an almost useless luxury; in fact, the "Dolphin" did not rely on the wind to escape the Federalists, but rather on her powerful engines.

Towards the end of December a trial of the steamer was made in the gulf of the Clyde. Which was the most satisfied, builder or captain, it is impossible to say. The new steamer shot along wonderfully, and the patent log showed a speed of seventeen miles an hour, a speed which as yet no English, French, or American boat had ever obtained. The "Dolphin" would certainly have gained by several lengths in a sailing match with the fastest opponent.

The loading was begun on the 25th of December, the steamer having ranged along the steamboat-quay a little

below Glasgow Bridge, the last which stretches across the Clyde before its mouth. Here the wharfs were heaped with a heavy cargo of clothes, ammunition, and provisions, which were rapidly carried to the hold of the "Dolphin." The nature of this cargo betrayed the mysterious destination of the ship, and the house of Playfair could no longer keep it secret; besides, the "Dolphin" must not be long before she started. No American cruiser had been signalled in English waters; and, then, when the question of getting the crew came, how was it possible to keep silent any longer? They could not embark them even, without informing the men whither they were bound, for, after all, it was a matter of life and death, and when one risks one's life, at least it is satisfactory to know how and wherefore.

However, this prospect hindered no one; the pay was good, and every one had a share in the speculation, so that a great number of the finest sailors soon presented themselves. James Playfair was only embarrassed which to choose, but he chose well, and in twenty-four hours his muster-roll bore the names of thirty sailors, who would have done honour to her Majesty's yacht.

The departure was settled for the 3rd of January; on the 31st of December the "Dolphin" was ready, her hold full of ammunition and provisions, and nothing was keeping her now.

The skipper went on board on the 2nd of January, and was giving a last look round his ship with a Captain's eye when a man presented himself at the fore part of the "Dolphin," and asked to speak with the Captain. One of the sailors led him on to the poop.

He was a strong, hearty-looking fellow, with broad shoulders and ruddy face, the simple expression of which ill concealed a depth of wit and mirth. He did not seem to be accustomed to a seafaring life, and looked about him with the air of a man little used to being on board a ship; however, he assumed the manner of a Jack-tar, looking up at the rigging of the "Dolphin," and waddling in true sailor fashion.

When he had reached the Captain, he looked fixedly at him and said, "Captain James Playfair?"

"The same," replied the skipper. "What do you want with me?"

"To join your ship."

"There is no room; the crew is already complete."

"Oh, one man, more or less, will not be in the way quite the contrary."

"You think so?" said James Playfair, giving a sidelong glance at his questioner.

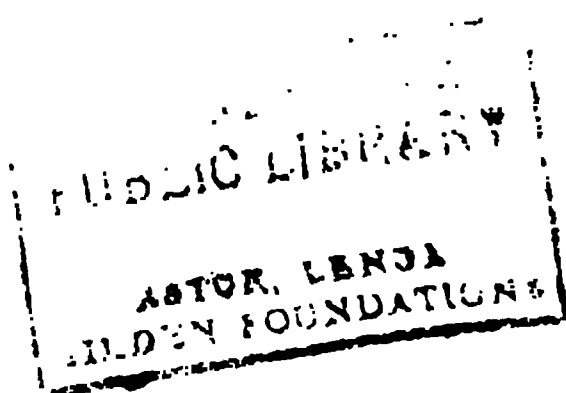
"I am sure of it," replied the sailor.

"But who are you?" asked the Captain.

"A rough sailor, with two strong arms, which, I can tell



"THE SAME," REPLIED THE SKIPPER.



you, are not to be despised on board a ship, and which I now have the honour of putting at your service."

"But there are other ships besides the 'Dolphin,' and other captains besides James Playfair. Why do you come here?"

"Because it is on board the 'Dolphin' that I wish to serve, and under the orders of Captain James Playfair."

"I do not want you."

"There is always need of a strong man, and if to prove my strength you will try me with three or four of the strongest fellows of your crew, I am ready."

"That will do," replied James Playfair. "And what is your name?"

"Crockston, at your service."

The Captain made a few steps backwards in order to get a better view of the giant, who presented himself in this odd fashion. The height, the build, and the look of the sailor did not deny his pretensions to strength.

"Where have you sailed?" asked Playfair of him.

"A little everywhere."

"And do you know where the 'Dolphin' is bound for?"

"Yes; and that is what tempts me."

"Ah, well! I have no mind to let a fellow of your stamp escape me. Go and find the first mate, and get him to enrol you."

Having said this the Captain expected to see the man turn on his heel and run to the bows, but he was mistaken. Crockston did not stir.

"Well! did you hear me?" asked the Captain.

"Yes, but it is not all," replied the sailor, "I have something else to ask you."

"Ah! You are wasting my time," replied James sharply. "I have not a moment to lose in talking."

"I shall not keep you long," replied Crockston, "two words more and that is all; I was going to tell you that I have a nephew."

"He has a fine uncle, then," interrupted James Playfair.

"Hah! Hah!" laughed Crockston.

"Have you finished?" asked the Captain, very impatiently.

"Well, this is what I have to say, when one takes the uncle, the nephew comes into the bargain."

"Ah! indeed!"

"Yes, that is the custom, the one does not go without the other."

"And what is this nephew of yours?"

"A lad of fifteen whom I am going to train to the sea; he is willing to learn, and will make a fine sailor some day."

"How now, Master Crockston," cried James Playfair, "do you think the 'Dolphin' is a training-school for cabin boys?"

"Don't let us speak ill of cabin-boys: there was one of them who became Admiral Nelson, and another Admiral Franklin."

"Upon my honour, friend," replied James Playfair, "you have a way of speaking which I like; bring your nephew, but if I don't find the uncle the hearty fellow he pretends to be, he will have some business with me. Go, and be back in an hour."

Crockston did not want to be told twice; he bowed awkwardly to the Captain of the "Dolphin," and went on to the quay. An hour afterwards he came on board with his nephew, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, rather delicate and weakly-looking, with a timid and astonished air, which showed that he did not possess his uncle's self-possession and vigorous corporeal qualities. Crockston was even obliged to encourage him by such words as these:—

"Come," said he, "don't be frightened, they are not going to eat us, besides there is yet time to return."

"No, no," replied the young man, "and may God protect us!"

The same day the sailor Crockston and his nephew were inscribed in the muster-roll of the "Dolphin."

The next morning, at five o'clock, the fires of the steamer were well fed, the deck trembled under the vibrations of the boiler, and the steam rushed hissing through the escape-pipes. The hour of departure had arrived.

A considerable crowd in spite of the early hour flocked on the quays and on Glasgow Bridge, they had come to salute the bold steamer for the last time. Vincent Playfair was there to say good-bye to Captain James, but he conducted himself on this occasion like a Roman of the good old times. His was a heroic countenance, and the two loud kisses with which he gratified his nephew were the indication of a strong mind.

"Go, James," said he to the young Captain, "go quickly, and come back quicker still; above all, don't abuse your position. Sell at a good price, make a good bargain, and you will have your uncle's esteem."

On this recommendation, borrowed from the manual of the perfect merchant, the uncle and nephew separated, and all the visitors left the boat.

At this moment Crockston and John Stiggs stood together on the forecastle, while the former remarked to his nephew, "This is well, this is well; before two o'clock we shall be at sea, and I have a good opinion of a voyage which begins like this."

For reply the novice pressed Crockston's hand.

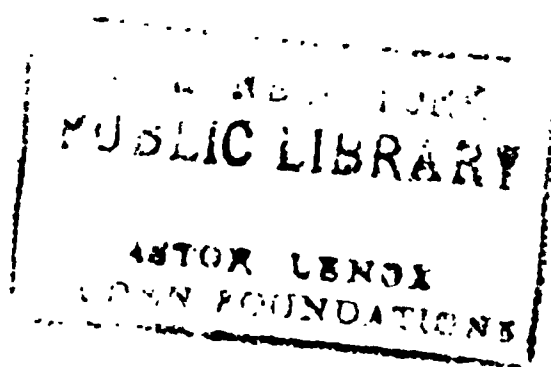
James Playfair then gave the orders for departure.

"Have we pressure on?" he asked of his mate.

"Yes, Captain," replied Mr. Mathew.

"Well, then, weigh anchor."

This was immediately done, and the screws began to





AND SOON DISAPPEARED.

move. The "Dolphin" trembled, passed between the ships in the port, and soon disappeared from the sight of the people, who shouted their last hurrahs.

The descent of the Clyde was easily accomplished, one might almost say that this river had been made by the hand of man, and even by the hand of a master. For sixty years, thanks to the dredges and constant dragging it has gained fifteen feet in depth, and its breadth has been tripled between the quays and the town. Soon the forests of masts and chimneys were lost in the smoke and fog; the noise of the foundry hammers, and the hatchets of the timber-yards grew fainter in the distance. After the village of Patrick had been passed the factories gave way to country houses and villas. The "Dolphin," slackening her speed, sailed between the dykes which carry the river above the shores, and often through very narrow channel, which, however, is only a small inconvenience for a navigable river, for, after all, depth is of more importance than width. The steamer, guided by one of those excellent pilots from the Irish sea, passed without hesitation between floating buoys, stone columns, and *biggings*, surmounted with light-houses, which mark the entrance to the channel. Beyond the town of Renfrew, at the foot of Kilpatrick hills, the Clyde grew wider. Then came Bouling Bay, at the end of which opens the mouth of the canal which joins Edinburgh to Glasgow. Lastly, at the height of four hundred feet

from the ground, was seen the outline of Dumbarton Castle, almost indiscernible through the mists, and soon the harbour-boats of Glasgow were rocked on the waves which the "Dolphin" caused. Some miles farther on Greenock, the birthplace of James Watt, was passed: the "Dolphin" now found herself at the mouth of the Clyde, and at the entrance of the gulf by which it empties its waters into the Northern Ocean. Here the first undulations of the sea were felt, and the steamer ranged along the picturesque coast of the Isle of Arran. At last the promontory of Cantyre, which runs out into the channel, was doubled; the Isle of Rattelin was hailed, the pilot returned by a shore-boat to his cutter, which was cruising in the open sea; the "Dolphin" returning to her Captain's authority, took a less frequented route round the north of Ireland, and soon, having lost sight of the last European land, found herself in the open ocean.

CHAPTER III.

THE "Dolphin" had a good crew, not fighting men, or boarding sailors, but good working men, and that was all she wanted. These brave, determined fellows were all, more or less, merchants; they sought a fortune rather than glory; they had no flag to display, no colours to defend with cannon; in fact all the artillery on board consisted of two small swivel signal-guns.

The "Dolphin" shot bravely across the water, and fulfilled the utmost expectations of both builder and captain. Soon she passed the limit of British seas; there was not a ship in sight; the great Ocean route was free; besides no ship of the Federal marine would have a right to attack her beneath the English flag. Followed she might be, and prevented from forcing the blockade, and precisely for this reason had James Playfair sacrificed everything to the speed of his ship, in order not to be pursued.

Howbeit a careful watch was kept on board, and in spite

of the extreme cold a man was always in the rigging ready to signal the smallest sail that appeared on the horizon. When evening came, Captain James gave the most precise orders to Mr. Mathew.

"Don't leave the man on watch too long in the rigging, the cold may seize him, and in that case it is impossible to keep a good look-out; change your men often."

"I understand, Captain," replied Mr. Mathew.

"Try Crockston for that work; the fellow pretends to have excellent sight; it must be put to trial; put him on the morning watch, he will have the morning mists to see through. If anything particular happens call me."

This said, James Playfair went to his cabin. Mr. Mathew called Crockston, and told him the Captain's orders.

"To-morrow, at six o'clock," said he, "you are to relieve watch of the main-masthead."

For reply, Crockston gave a decided grunt, but Mr. Mathew had hardly turned his back when the sailor muttered some incomprehensible words, and then cried,—

"What on earth did he say about the main-mast?"

At this moment his nephew, John Stiggs, joined him on the forecastle.

"Well, my good Crockston," said he.

"It's all right, all right," said the seaman, with a forced

smile ; " there is only one thing, this wretched boat shakes herself like a dog coming out of the water, and it makes my head confused."

" Dear Crockston, and it is for my sake."

" For you and him," replied Crockston, " but not a word about that, John ; trust in God, and He will not forsake you."

So saying, John Stiggs and Crockston went to the sailor's berth, but the sailor did not lie down before he had seen the young novice comfortably settled in the narrow cabin which he had got for him.

The next day, at six o'clock in the morning, Crockston got up to go to his place ; he went on deck, where the first officer ordered him to go up into the rigging, and keep good watch.

At these words the sailor seemed undecided what to do ; then making up his mind, he went towards the bows of the " Dolphin."

" Well, where are you off to now ? " cried Mr. Mathew.

" Where you sent me," answered Crockston.

" I told you to go to the main-mast."

" And I am going there," replied the sailor, in an unconcerned tone, continuing his way to the poop.

" Are you a fool ? " cried Mr. Mathew, impatiently ; " you are looking for the bars of the main on the foremast. You are like a cockney, who doesn't know how to twist a

cat-o'-nine-tails, or make a splice. On board what ship can you have been, man? The main-mast, stupid, the main-mast!"

The sailors who had run up to hear what was going on, burst out laughing, when they saw Crockston's disconcerted look, as he went back to the forecastle.

"So," said he, looking up the mast, the top of which was quite invisible through the morning mists; "so, am I to climb up here?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Mathew, "and hurry yourself! By St. Patrick a Federal ship would have time to get her bowsprit fast in our rigging before that lazy fellow could get to his post. Will you go up?"

Without a word, Crockston got on the bulwarks with some difficulty; then he began to climb the rigging with most visible awkwardness, like a man who did not know how to make use of his hands or feet. When he had reached the top-gallant, instead of springing lightly on to it, he remained motionless, clinging to the ropes, as if he had been seized with giddiness. Mr. Mathew, irritated by his stupidity ordered him to come down immediately.

"That fellow there," said he to the boatswain, "has never been a sailor in his life. Johnston, just go and see what he has in his bundle."

The boatswain made haste to the sailor's berth.

In the meantime Crockston was with difficulty coming

down again, but his foot having slipped, he slid down the rope he had hold of, and fell heavily on the deck.

“Clumsy blockhead! land-lubber!” cried Mr. Mathew, by way of consolation. “What did you come to do on board the ‘Dolphin’! Ah! you entered as an able seaman, and you cannot even distinguish the main from the foremast! I shall have a little talk with you.”

Crockston made no attempt to speak; he bent his back like a man resigned for anything he might have to bear; just then the boatswain returned.

“This,” said he to the first officer, “is all that I have found; a suspicious portfolio with letters.”

“Give them here,” said Mr. Mathew. “Letters with Federal stamps! Mr. Halliburtt, of Boston! An abolitionist! a Federalist! Wretch! you are nothing but a traitor, and have sneaked on board to betray us! Never mind, you will be paid for your trouble with the cat-o’-nine-tails! Boatswain, call the Captain, and you others, just keep an eye on that rogue there.”

Crockston received these compliments with a hideous grimace, but he did not open his lips. They had fastened him to the capstan, and he could move neither hand nor foot.

A few minutes later James Playfair came out of his cabin and went to the fore-castle, where Mr. Mathew

immediately acquainted him with the details of the case.

"What have you to say?" asked James Playfair, scarcely able to restrain his anger.

"Nothing," replied Crockston.

"And what did you come on board my ship for?"

"Nothing."

"And what do you expect from me now?"

"Nothing."

"Who are you? An American, as these letters seem to prove?"

Crockston did not answer.

"Boatswain," said James Playfair, "fifty lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails to loosen his tongue. Will that be enough, Crockston?"

"It will remain to be seen," replied John Stiggs' uncle without moving a muscle.

"Now then, come along, men," said the boatswain.

At this order, two strong sailors stripped Crockston of his woollen jersey; they had already seized the formidable weapon, and laid it across the prisoner's shoulders, when the novice, John Stiggs, pale and agitated, hurried on deck.

"Captain!" exclaimed he.

"Ah! the nephew!" remarked James Playfair.

"Captain," repeated the novice, with a violent effort to



"CAPTAIN!" EXCLAIMED HE.

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steady his voice, "I will tell you what Crockston does not want to say. I will hide it no longer; yes, he is American, and so am I; we are both enemies of the slaveholders, but not traitors come on board to betray the 'Dolphin' into the hands of the Federalists."

"What did you come to do, then?" asked the Captain, in a severe tone, examining the novice attentively. The latter hesitated a few seconds before replying, then he said, "Captain, I should like to speak to you in private."

Whilst John Stiggs made this request, James Playfair did not cease to look carefully at him; the sweet young face of the novice, his peculiarly gentle voice, the delicacy and whiteness of his hands, hardly disguised by paint, the large eyes, the animation of which could not hide their tenderness—all this together gave rise to a certain suspicion in the Captain's mind. When John Stiggs had made his request, Playfair glanced fixedly at Crockston, who shrugged his shoulders; then he fastened a questioning look on the novice, which the latter could not withstand, and said simply to him, "Come."

John Stiggs followed the Captain on to the poop, and then James Playfair, opening the door of his cabin, said to the novice, whose cheeks were pale with emotion, "Be so kind as to walk in, miss."

John, thus addressed, blushed violently, and two tears rolled involuntarily down his cheeks.

"Don't be alarmed, miss," said James Playfair, in a gentle voice, "but be so good as to tell me how I come to have the honour of having you on board?"

The young girl hesitated a moment, then reassured by the Captain's look, she made up her mind to speak.

"Sir," said she, "I wanted to join my father at Charleston; the town is besieged by land and blockaded by sea. I knew not how to get there, when I heard that the 'Dolphin' meant to force the blockade. I came on board your ship, and I beg you to forgive me if I acted without your consent, which you would have refused me."

"Certainly," said James Playfair.

"I did well, then, not to ask you," resumed the young girl, with a firmer voice.

The Captain crossed his arms, walked round his cabin and then came back.

"What is your name?" said he.

"Jenny Halliburtt."

"Your father, if I remember rightly the address on the letters, is he not from Boston?"

"Yes, sir."

"And a Northerner is thus in a southern town in the thickest of the war?"

"My father is a prisoner; he was at Charleston when the first shot of the Civil War was fired, and the troops of the Union driven from Fort Sumter by the Confede-

ates. My father's opinions exposed him to the hatred of the Slavist part, and by the order of General Beauregard he was imprisoned. I was then in England, living with a relation, who has just died, and left alone with no help but that of Crockston, our faithful servant, I wished to go to my father and share his prison with him."

"What was Mr. Halliburtt, then?" asked James Playfair.

"A loyal and brave journalist," replied Jenny proudly, "one of the noblest editors of the 'Tribune,' and the one who was the boldest in defending the cause of the negroes."

"An abolitionist," cried the Captain angrily; "one of those men, who, under the vain pretence of abolishing slavery, have deluged their country with blood and ruin."

"Sir!" replied Jenny Halliburtt, growing pale, "you are insulting my father; you must not forget that I stand alone to defend him."

The young Captain blushed scarlet; anger mingled with shame struggled in his breast; perhaps he would have answered the young girl, but he succeeded in restraining himself, and opening the door of the cabin, he called "Boatswain!"

The boatswain came to him directly.

"This cabin will henceforward belong to Miss Jenny Halliburtt; have a cot made ready for me at the end of the poop; that's all I want."

The boatswain looked with a stupefied stare at the young novice addressed in a feminine name, but on a sign from James Playfair he went out.

“And now, miss, you are at home,” said the young Captain of the “Dolphin.” Then he retired.

CHAPTER IV.

CROCKSTON'S TRICK.

IT was not long before the whole crew knew Miss Halliburtt's story, which Crockston was no longer hindered from telling. By the Captain's orders he was released from the capstan, and the cat-o'-nine-tails returned to its place.

"A pretty animal," said Crockston, "especially when it shows its velvety paws."

As soon as he was free, he went down to the sailors' berths, found a small portmanteau, and carried it to Miss Jenny; the young girl was now able to resume her feminine attire, but she remained in her cabin, and did not again appear on deck.

As for Crockston, it was well and duly agreed that, as he was no more a sailor than a horse-guard, he should be exempt from all duty on board.

In the meanwhile the "Dolphin," with her twin screws

cutting the waves, sped rapidly across the Atlantic, and there was nothing now to do but keep a strict look out. The day following the discovery of Miss Jenny's identity, James Playfair paced the deck at the poop with a rapid step; he had made no attempt to see the young girl and resume the conversation of the day before.

Whilst he was walking to and fro, Crockston passed him several times, looking at him askant with a satisfied grin: he evidently wanted to speak to the Captain, and at last his persistent manner attracted the attention of the latter, who said to him, somewhat impatiently,—

"How now, what do you want? You are turning round me like a swimmer round a buoy: when are you going to leave off?"

"Excuse me, Captain," answered Crockston, winking. "I wanted to speak to you."

"Speak, then."

"Oh, it is nothing very much, I only wanted to tell you frankly that you are a good fellow at bottom."

"Why at bottom?"

"At bottom and surface also."

"I don't want your compliments."

"I am not complimenting you, I shall wait to do that when you have gone to the end."

"To what end?"

"To the end of your task."

"Ah! I have a task to fulfil?"

"Decidedly, you have taken the young girl and myself on board; good. You have given up your cabin to Miss Halliburtt; good. You released me from the cat-o'-nine-tails; nothing could be better. You are going to take us straight to Charleston; that's delightful, but it is not all."

"How not all?" cried James Playfair, amazed at Crockston's boldness.

"No, certainly not," replied the latter, with a knowing look, "the father is prisoner there."

"Well, what about that?"

"Well, the father must be rescued."

"Rescue Miss Halliburtt's father?"

"Most certainly, and it is worth risking something for such a noble man and courageous citizen as he."

"Master Crockston," said James Playfair, frowning, "I am not in the humour for your jokes, so have a care what you say."

"You misunderstand me, Captain," said the American. "I am not joking in the least, but speaking quite seriously. What I have proposed may at first seem very absurd to you; when you have thought it over you will see that you cannot do otherwise."

"What, do you mean that I must deliver Mr. Halliburtt?"

"Just so, you can demand his release of General Beauregard, who will not refuse you."

"But if he does refuse me?"

"In that case," replied Crockston, in a deliberate tone, "we must use stronger measures, and carry off the prisoner by force."

"So," cried James Playfair, who was beginning to get angry, "so, not content with passing through the Federal fleets and forcing the blockade of Charleston, I must run out to sea again from under the cannon of the forts, and this to deliver a gentleman I know nothing of, one of those Abolitionists whom I detest, one of those journalists who shed ink instead of their blood!"

"Oh! it is but a cannon-shot more or less!" added Crockston.

"Master Crockston," said James Playfair, "mind what I say; if ever you mention this affair again to me, I will send you to the hold for the rest of the passage, to teach you manners."

Thus saying the Captain dismissed the American, who went off murmuring, "Ah, well, I am not altogether displeased with this conversation: at any rate, the affair is broached; it will do, it will do!"

James Playfair had hardly meant it when he said an Abolitionist whom I detest; he did not in the least side with the Federals, but he did not wish to admit that the question of slavery was the predominant reason for the civil war of the United States, in spite of President

Lincoln's formal declaration. Did he then think that the Southern States, eight out of thirty-six, were right in separating when they had been voluntarily united? Not so; he detested the Northerners, and that was all; he detested them as brothers separated from the common family—true Englishmen—who had thought it right to do what he, James Playfair, disapproved of with regard to the United States: these were the political opinions of the Captain of the "Dolphin." But more than this, the American war interfered with him personally, and he had a grudge against those who had caused this war; one can understand, then, how he would receive a proposition to deliver an Abolitionist, thus bringing down on him the Confederates, with whom he pretended to do business.

However, Crockston's insinuation did not fail to disturb him, he cast the thought from him, but it returned unceasingly to his mind, and when Miss Jenny came on deck the next day for a few minutes, he dared not look her in the face.

And really it was a great pity, for this young girl with the fair hair and sweet, intelligent face deserved to be looked at by a young man of thirty. But James felt embarrassed in her presence; he felt that this charming creature who had been educated in the school of misfortune possessed a strong and generous soul; he understood that his silence towards her inferred a re- acquiesce in

her dearest wishes ; besides, Miss Jenny never looked out for James Playfair, neither did she avoid him. Thus for the first few days they spoke little or not at all to each other. Miss Halliburtt scarcely ever left her cabin, and it is certain she would never have addressed herself to the Captain of the "Dolphin" if it had not been for Crockston's strategy, which brought both parties together.

The worthy American was a faithful servant of the Halliburtt family, he had been brought up in his master's house and his devotion knew no bounds. His good sense equalled his courage and energy, and, as has been seen, he had a way of looking things straight in the face. He was very seldom discouraged, and could generally find a way out of the most intricate dangers with a wonderful skill.

This honest fellow had taken it into his head to deliver Mr. Halliburtt, to employ the Captain's ship, and the Captain himself for this purpose, and to return with him to England. Such was his intention, so long as the young girl had no other object than to rejoin her father and share his captivity. It was this Crockston tried to make the Captain understand, as we have seen, but the enemy had not yet surrendered, on the contrary.

"Now," said he, "it is absolutely necessary that Miss Jenny and the Captain come to an understanding ; if they are going to be sulky like this all the passage we shall get nothing done : they must speak, discuss ; let them dispute

even, so long as they talk, and I'll be hanged if during their conversation James Playfair does not propose himself what he refused me to-day."

But when Crockston saw that the young girl and the young man avoided each other, he began to be perplexed.

"We must look sharp," said he to himself, and the morning of the fourth day he entered Miss Halliburtt's cabin, rubbing his hands with an air of perfect satisfaction.

"Good news!" cried he, "good news! You will never guess what the Captain has proposed to me. A very noble young man he is. Now try."

"Ah!" replied Jenny, whose heart beat violently, "has he proposed to—"

"To deliver Mr. Halliburtt, to carry him off from the Confederates, and bring him to England."

"Is it true?" cried Jenny.

"It is, as I say, miss. What a good-hearted man this James Playfair is! These English are either all good or all bad. Ah! he may reckon on my gratitude, and I am ready to cut myself in pieces if it would please him."

Jenny's joy was profound on hearing Crockston's words. Deliver her father! she had never dared to think of such a plan, and the Captain of the "Dolphin" was going to risk his ship and crew!

"That's what he is," added Crockston; "and this, Miss Jenny, is well worth an acknowledgment from you."

“More than an acknowledgment,” cried the young girl; “a lasting friendship!”

And immediately she left the cabin to find James Playfair, and express to him the sentiments which flowed from her heart.

“Getting on by degrees,” muttered the American.

James Playfair was pacing to and fro on the poop, and, as may be thought, he was very much surprised, not to say amazed, to see the young girl go up to him, her eyes moist with grateful tears, and holding out her hand to him saying,—

“Thank you, sir, thank you for your kindness, which I should never have dared to expect from a stranger.”

“Miss,” replied the Captain, as if he understood nothing of what she was talking, and could not understand, “I do not know—”

“Nevertheless, sir, you are going to brave many dangers, perhaps compromise your interests for me, and you have done so much already in offering me on board an hospitality to which I have no right whatever—”

“Pardon me, Miss Jenny,” interrupted James Playfair, “but I protest again I do not understand your words; I have acted towards you as any well-bred man would towards a lady, and my conduct deserves neither so many thanks nor so much gratitude.”

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"THANK YOU, SIR, THANK YOU."

"Mr. Playfair," said Jenny, "it is useless to pretend any longer; Crockston has told me all!"

"Ah!" said the Captain, "Crockston has told you all, then I understand less than ever the reason for your leaving your cabin, and saying these words which—"

Whilst speaking the Captain felt very much embarrassed; he remembered the rough way in which he had received the American's overtures, but Jenny, fortunately for him, did not give him time for further explanation; she interrupted him, holding out her hand and saying,—

"Mr. James, I had no other object in coming on board your ship except to go to Charleston, and there, however cruel the slave-holders may be, they will not refuse to let a poor girl share her father's prison, that was all; I had never thought of a return as possible; but since you are so generous as to wish for my father's deliverance, since you will attempt everything to save him, be assured you have my deepest gratitude."

James did not know what to do or what part to assume; he bit his lip; he dared not take the hand offered him; he saw perfectly that Crockston had compromised him, so that escape was impossible; at the same time he had no thought of delivering Mr. Halliburtt, and getting complicated in a disagreeable business: but how dash to the ground the hope which had arisen in this poor girl's heart? How refuse the hand which she held out to him with a feeling of such pro-

found friendship? How change to tears of grief the tears of gratitude which filled her eyes?

So the young man tried to reply evasively, in a manner which would insure his liberty of action for the future.

"Miss Jenny," said he, "rest assured I will do everything in my power for—"

And he took the little hand in both of his, but with the gentle pressure he felt his heart melt and his head grow confused: words to express his thoughts failed him. He stammered out some incoherent words,—

"Miss—Miss Jenny—for you—"

Crockston, who was watching him, rubbed his hands, grinning and repeating to himself,—

"It will come! it will come! it has come!"

How James Playfair would have managed to extricate himself from his embarrassing position no one knows, but fortunately for him, if not for the "Dolphin," the man on watch was heard crying,—

"Ahoy, officer of the watch!"

"What now?" asked Mr. Mathew.

"A sail to windward!"

James Playfair, leaving the young girl, immediately sprang to the shrouds of the main-mast.

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HE SAW DISTINCTLY.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHOT FROM THE "IROQUOIS," AND MISS JENNY'S
ARGUMENTS.

UNTIL now the navigation of the "Dolphin" had been very fortunate. Not one ship had been signalled before the sail hailed by the man on watch.

The "Dolphin" was then in $32^{\circ} 51'$ latitude, and $57^{\circ} 43'$ west longitude. For forty-eight hours a fog which now began to rise had covered the ocean. If this mist favoured the "Dolphin" by hiding her course, it also prevented any observations at a distance being made, and, without being aware of it, she might be sailing side by side, so to speak, with the ships she wished most to avoid.

Now this is just what had happened, and when the ship was signalled she was only three miles to windward.

When James Playfair had reached the cross-trees, he saw distinctly, through an opening in the mist, a large Federal corvette in full pursuit of the "Dolphin."

After having carefully examined her, the Captain came down on deck again, and called to the first officer.

"Mr. Mathew," said he, "what do you think of this ship?"

"I think, Captain, that it is a Federal cruiser, which suspects our intentions."

"There is no possible doubt of her nationality," said James Playfair. "Look!"

At this moment the starry flag of the North United States appeared on the gaff-yards of the corvette, and the latter asserted her colours with a cannon-shot.

"An invitation to show ours," said Mr. Mathew. "Well, let us show them; there is nothing to be ashamed of."

"What's the good?" replied James Playfair. "Our flag will hardly protect us, and it will not hinder those people from paying us a visit? No; let us go ahead."

"And go quickly," replied Mr. Mathew, "for if my eyes do not deceive me, I have already seen that corvette lying off Liverpool, where she went to watch the ships building: my name is not Mathew, if that is not 'The Iroquois' on her taffrail."

"And is she fast?"

"One of the fastest vessels of the Federal marine."

"What guns does she carry?"

"Eight."

"Pooh."

"Oh, don't shrug your shoulders, Captain," said

Mathew, in a serious tone ; "two out of those eight guns are rifled, one is a sixty-pounder on the forecastle, and the other a hundred-pounder on deck."

"Upon my soul !" exclaimed James Playfair, "they are Parrott's, and will carry three miles."

"Yes, and farther than that, Captain."

"Ah, well ! Mr. Mathew, let their guns be sixty or only four-pounders, and let them carry three miles or five hundred yards, it is all the same if we can go fast enough to avoid their shot. We will show this 'Iroquois' how a ship can go when she is built on purpose to go. Have the fires drawn forward, Mr. Matthew."

The first officer gave the Captain's orders to the engineer, and soon volumes of black smoke curled from the steamer's chimneys.

This proceeding did not seem to please the corvette, for she made the "Dolphin" the signal to lie to, but James Playfair paid no attention to this warning, and did not change his ship's course.

"Now," said he, "we shall see what the 'Iroquois' will do ; there is a fine opportunity for her to try her guns ; go ahead full speed !"

"Good !" exclaimed Mr. Mathew ; "she will not be long in saluting us."

Returning to the poop, the Captain saw Miss Halliburtt sitting quietly near the bulwarks.

"Miss Jenny," said he, "we shall probably be chased by that corvette you see to windward, and as she will speak to us with shot, I beg to offer you my arm to take you to your cabin again."

"Thank you, very much, Mr. Playfair," replied the young girl, looking at him, "but I am not afraid of cannon shots."

"However, miss, in spite of the distance, there may be some danger."

"Oh, I was not brought up to be fearful; they accustom us to everything in America, and I assure you that a shot from the 'Iroquois' will not make me lower my head."

"You are brave, Miss Jenny."

"Let us admit, then, that I am brave, and allow me to stay by you."

"I can refuse you nothing, Miss Halliburtt," replied the Captain, looking at the young girl's calm face.

These words were hardly uttered when they saw a line of white smoke issue from the bulwarks of the corvette; before the report had reached the "Dolphin" a projectile whizzed through the air in the direction of the steamer.

At about twenty fathoms from the "Dolphin" the ship, the speed of which had sensibly lessened, skimmed over the surface of the waves, marking its passage by

series of water-jets ; then, with another burst, it rebounded to a certain height, passed over the "Dolphin," grazing the mizen-yards on the starboard side, fell at thirty fathoms beyond, and was buried in the waves.

"By Jove!" exclaimed James Playfair, "we must get along; another slap like that is not to be waited for."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Mathew, "they will take some time to reload such pieces."

"Upon my honour, it is an interesting sight," said Crockston, who, with arms crossed, stood perfectly at his ease looking at the scene."

"Ah! that's you," cried James Playfair, scanning the American from head to foot.

"It is me, Captain," replied the American, undisturbed. "I have come to see how these brave Federals fire; not badly, in truth, not badly."

The Captain was going to answer Crockston sharply, but at this moment a second shot struck the sea on the starboard side.

"Good," cried James Playfair, "we have already gained two cables on this 'Iroquois.' Your friends sail like a buoy; do you hear, Master Crockston?"

"I will not say they don't," replied the American, "and for the first time in my life it does not fail to please me."

A third shot fell still farther astern, and in less than ten minutes the "Dolphin" was out of range of the corvette's guns.

"So much for patent-logs, Mr. Mathew," said James Playfair; "thanks to those shot we know how to raise our speed. Now have the fires lowered; it is not worth while to waste our coal uselessly."

"It is a good ship that you command," said Miss Halburtt to the young Captain.

"Yes, Miss Jenny, my good 'Dolphin,' makes her seventeen knots, and before the day is over, we shall have lost sight of that corvette."

James Playfair did not exaggerate the sailing qualities of his ship, and the sun had not set before the masts of the American ship had disappeared below the horizon.

This incident allowed the Captain to see Miss Halburtt's character in a new light; besides, the ice was broken, henceforward, during the whole of the voyage the interviews between the Captain and his passenger were frequent and prolonged; he found her to be a young girl calm, strong, thoughtful, and intelligent, speaking with great ease, having her own ideas about everything, and expressing her thoughts with a conviction which unconsciously penetrated James Playfair's heart.

She loved her country, she was zealous in the great cause of the Union, and expressed herself on the civil

in the United States with an enthusiasm of which no other woman would have been capable. Thus it happened, more than once, that James Playfair found it difficult to answer her, even when questions purely mercantile arose in connexion with the war: Miss Jenny attacked them none the less vigorously, and would come to no other terms whatever. At first James argued a great deal, and tried to uphold the Confederates against the Federals, to prove that the Secessionists were in the right, and that if the people were united voluntarily they might separate in the same manner. But the young girl would not yield on this point; she demonstrated that the question of slavery was predominant in the struggle between the North and South Americans, that it was far more a war in the cause of morals and humanity than politics, and James could make no answer. Besides, during these discussions, which he listened to attentively, it is difficult to say whether he was more touched by Miss Halliburtt's arguments, or the charming manner in which she spoke; but at last he was obliged to acknowledge, among other things, that slavery was the principal feature in the war, that it must be put an end to decisively, and the last horrors of barbarous times abolished.

It has been said that the political opinions of the Captain did not trouble him much. He would have sacrificed his most serious opinion before such enticing arguments.

and under like circumstances ; he made a good bargain for his ideas for the same reason, but at last he was attacked in his tenderest point : this was the question of the traffic in which the " Dolphin " was being employed, and, consequently, the ammunition which was being carried to Confederates.

" Yes, Mr. James," said Miss Halliburtt, " gratitude does not hinder me from speaking with perfect frankness ; on the contrary, you are a brave seaman, a clever merchant, the house of Playfair is noted for its respectability ; but in this case it fails in its principles, and follows a trade unworthy of it."

" How ! " cried James, " the house of Playfair ought not to attempt such a commercial enterprise ? "

" No ! it is taking ammunition to the unhappy creatures in revolt against the government of their country, and it is lending arms to a bad cause."

" Upon my honour, Miss Jenny, I will not discuss the right of the Confederates with you ; I will only answer you with one word : I am a merchant, and as such I only occupy myself with the interests of my house ; I look for gain wherever there is an opportunity of getting it."

" That is precisely what is to be blamed, Mr. James," replied the young girl ; " profit does not excuse ; thus, when you supply arms to the Southerners, with which to continue a criminal war, you are quite as guilty."

as when you sell opium to the Chinese, which stupefies them."

"Oh! for once, Miss Jenny, this is too much, and I cannot admit—"

"No; what I say is just, and when you consider it, when you understand the part you are playing, when you think of the results for which you are responsible, you will yield to me in this point, as in so many others."

James Playfair was dumbfounded at these words; he left the young girl, a prey to angry thoughts, for he felt his powerlessness to answer; then he sulked like a child for half an hour, and an hour later he returned to the singular young girl who could overwhelm him with convincing arguments, with quite a pleasant smile.

In short, however it may have come about, and although he would not acknowledge it to himself, Captain James Playfair belonged to himself no longer, he was no longer commander-in-chief on board his own ship.

Thus, to Crockston's great joy, Mr. Halliburtt's affairs appeared to be in a good way; the Captain seemed to have decided to undertake everything in his power to deliver Miss Jenny's father, and for this he would be obliged to compromise the "Dolphin," his cargo, his crew, and incur the displeasure of his worthy uncle Vincent.

CHAPTER VI.

SULLIVAN ISLAND CHANNEL.

TWO days after the meeting with the "Iroquois," the "Dolphin" found herself abreast of the Bermudas, when she was assailed by a violent squall. These isles are frequently visited by hurricanes, and are celebrated for shipwrecks. It is here that Shakspeare has placed the exciting scene of his drama, "The Tempest," in which Ariel and Caliban dispute for the empire of the floods.

The squall was frightful; James Playfair thought of running for one of the Bermudas, where the English had a military post: it would have been a sad waste of time, and therefore especially to be regretted; happily the "Dolphin" behaved herself wonderfully well in the storm, and after flying a whole day before the tempest she was able to resume her course towards the American coast.

But if James Playfair had been pleased with his ship,



THE SQUALL.

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had not been less delighted with the young girl's bravery; Miss Halliburtt had passed the worst hours of the storm at his side, and James knew that a profound, imperious, irresistible love had taken possession of his whole being.

"Yes," said he, "this brave girl is mistress on board; she turns me like the sea a ship in distress—I feel that I am foundering! What will Uncle Vincent say? Ah! poor nature, I am sure that if Jenny asked me to throw all this cursed cargo into the sea, I should do it without hesitating, for love of her."

Happily for the firm of Playfair and Co., Miss Halliburtt did not demand this sacrifice; nevertheless, the poor Captain had been taken captive, and Crockston, who read his heart like an open book, rubbed his hands gleefully.

"We will hold him fast!" he muttered to himself, "and before a week has passed my master will be quietly installed in one of the best cabins of the 'Dolphin.'"

As for Miss Jenny, did she perceive the feelings which she inspired? did she allow herself to share them? No one could say, and James Playfair least of all; the young girl kept a perfect reserve, and her secret remained deeply buried in her heart.

But whilst love was making such progress in the heart of the young Captain, the "Dolphin" sped with no less rapidity towards Charleston.

On the 13th of January, the watch signalled land ten

miles to the west. It was a low-lying coast, and almost blended with the line of the sea in the distance. Crockst was examining the horizon attentively, and about nine o'clock in the morning he cried,—

“Charleston light-house!”

Now that the bearings of the “Dolphin” were set, James Playfair had but one thing to do, to decide by which channel he would run into Charleston Bay.

“If we meet with no obstacles,” said he, “before ten o'clock we shall be in safety in the docks of the port.”

The town of Charleston is situated on the banks of an estuary seven miles long and two broad, called Charleston Harbour, the entrance to which is rather difficult. It is enclosed between Morris Island on the south, and Sullivan Island on the north. At the time when the “Dolphin” attempted to force the blockade Morris Island already belonged to the Federal troops, and General Gillmore had caused batteries to be erected overlooking the harbour. Sullivan Island, on the contrary, was in the hands of the Confederates, who were also in possession of Moultrie Fort, situated at the extremity of the island; therefore it would be advantageous to the “Dolphin” to go as close as possible to the northern shores to avoid the firing from the forts on Morris Island.

Five channels led into the estuary, Sullivan Island Channel, the Northern Channel, the Overall Channel, the



CROCKSTON WAS EXAMINING THE HORIZON ATTENTIVELY.

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Principal Channel, and lastly, the Lawford Channel ; but it was useless for strangers, unless they had skilful pilots on board, or ships drawing less than seven feet of water to attempt this last ; as for Northern and Overall Channels, they were in range of the Federalist batteries, so that it was no good thinking of them. If James Playfair could have had his choice, he would have taken his steamer through the Principal Channel, which was the best, and the bearings of which were easy to follow ; but it was necessary to yield to circumstances, and to decide according to the event. Besides, the Captain of the "Dolphin" knew perfectly all the secrets of this bay, its dangers, the depths of its water at low tide, and its currents, so that he was able to steer his ship with the greatest safety as soon as he entered one of these narrow straits. The great question was to get there.

Now this work demanded an experienced seaman, and one who knew exactly the qualities of the "Dolphin."

In fact two Federal frigates were now cruising in the Charleston waters. Mr. Mathew soon drew James Playfair's attention to them.

"They are preparing to ask us what we want on these shores," said he.

"Ah, well ! we won't answer them," replied the Captain, "and they will not get their curiosity satisfied."

In the meanwhile the cruisers were coming on full steam

towards the "Dolphin," who continued her course, taking care to keep out of range of their guns. But in order to gain time James Playfair made for the south-west, wishing to put the enemies' ships off their guard ; the latter must have thought that the "Dolphin" intended to make for Morris Island Channel. Now there they had batteries and guns, a single shot from which would have been enough to sink the English ship ; so the Federals allowed the "Dolphin" to run towards the south-west, contenting themselves by observing her without following closely.

Thus for an hour the respective situations of the ships did not change, for James Playfair, wishing to deceive the cruisers as to the course of the "Dolphin," had caused the fires to be moderated, so that the speed was decreased. However, from the thick volumes of smoke which escaped from the chimneys, it might have been thought that he was trying to get his maximum pressure, and, consequently, his maximum of rapidity.

"They will be slightly astonished presently," said James Playfair, "when they see us slip through their fingers !"

In fact, when the Captain saw that he was near enough to Morris Island, and before a line of guns, the range of which he did not know, he turned his rudder quickly, and the ship resumed her northerly course, leaving the cruisers ten miles to windward of her ; the latter seeing this manœuvre

understood the steamer's object, and began to pursue her in earnest, but it was too late. The "Dolphin" doubled her speed under the action of the screws, and distanced them rapidly. Going nearer to the coast, a few shells were sent after her as an acquittal of conscience, but the Federals were outdone, for their projectiles did not reach half way. At eleven o'clock in the morning, the steamer ranging near Sullivan Island, thanks to her small draft, entered the narrow strait full steam; there she was in safety, for no Federalist cruiser dared follow her in this channel, the depth of which, on an average, was only eleven feet at low tide.

"How?" cried Crockston, "and is that the only difficulty?"

"Oh! oh! Master Crockston," said James Playfair, "the difficulty is not in entering, but in getting out again."

"Nonsense!" replied the American, "that does not make me at all uneasy; with a boat like the 'Dolphin' and a Captain like Mr. James Playfair, one can go where one likes, and come out in the same manner."

Nevertheless, James Playfair, with telescope in his hand, was attentively examining the route to be followed. He had before him excellent coasting guides, with which he could go a-head without any difficulty or hesitation.

Once his ship safely in the narrow channel which runs the length of Sullivan Island, James steered bearing

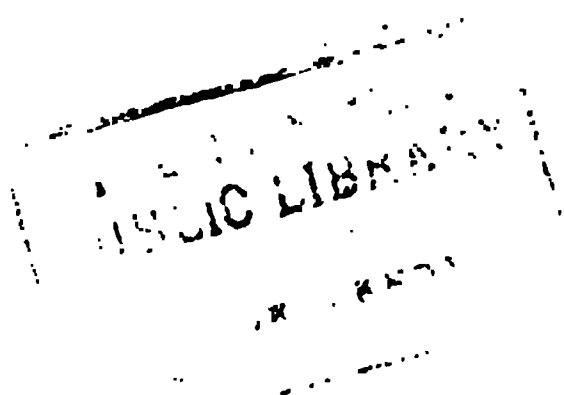
towards the middle of Fort Moultrie as far as the Pickney Castle, situated on the isolated island of Shute's Folly; on the other side rose Fort Johnson, a little way to the north of Fort Sumter.

At this moment the steamer was saluted by some shot which did not reach her, from the batteries on Morris Island. She continued her course without any deviation, passed before Moultrieville, situated at the extremity of Sullivan Island, and entered the bay.

Soon Fort Sumter on the left protected her from the batteries of the Federalists.

This fort, so celebrated in the civil war, is situated three miles and a half from Charleston, and about a mile from each side of the bay: it is nearly pentagonal in form, built on an artificial island of Massachusetts granite, it took ten years to construct and cost more than 900,000 dollars.

It was from this fort, on the 13th of April, 1861, that Anderson and the Federal troops were driven, and it was against it that the first shot of the Confederates was fired. It is impossible to estimate the quantity of iron and lead which the Federals showered down upon it. However, it resisted for almost three years, but a few months after the passage of the "Dolphin," it fell beneath General Gillmore's three hundred-pounders on Morris Island.





MISS HALLIBURTT WAS STANDING ON THE POOP.

THE BLOCKADE RUNNERS.

But at this time it was in all its strength, and the Confederate flag floated proudly above it.

Once past the fort the town of Charleston appeared lying between Ashley and Cooper rivers.

James Playfair threaded his way through the buoys which mark the entrance of the channel, leaving behind the Charleston lighthouse visible above Morris Island. He had hoisted the English flag, and made his way with wonderful rapidity through the narrow channels. When he had passed the Quarantine buoy, he advanced freely into the centre of the bay. Miss Halliburtt was standing on the poop, looking at the town where her father was kept prisoner, and her eyes filled with tears.

At last the steamer's speed was moderated by the Captain's orders; the "Dolphin" ranged along the edge of the south and east batteries, and was soon moored at the quay of the North Commercial Wharf.

CHAPTER VII.

A SOUTHERN GENERAL.

THE "Dolphin" on arriving at the Charleston quay, had been saluted by the cheers of a large crowd. The inhabitants of this town, strictly blockaded by sea, were not accustomed to visits from European ships. They asked each other, not without astonishment, what this great steamer, proudly bearing the English flag, had come to do in their waters; but when they learned the object of her voyage, and why she had just forced the passage Sullivan, when the report spread that she carried a cargo of smuggled ammunition, the cheers and joyful cries were redoubled.

James Playfair, without losing a moment, entered into negotiation with General Beauregard, the military commander of the town. The latter eagerly received the young Captain of the "Dolphin," who had arrived in time to provide the soldiers with the clothes and ammunition they were so much in want of. It was agreed that the unload-

ing of the ship should take place immediately, and numerous hands came to help the English sailors.

Before quitting his ship James Playfair had received from Miss Halliburtt the most pressing injunctions with regard to her father, and the Captain had placed himself entirely at the young girl's service.

"Miss Jenny," he had said, "you may rely on me; I will do the utmost in my power to save your father, but I hope this business will not present many difficulties; I shall go and see General Beauregard to-day, and without asking him at once for Mr. Halliburtt's liberty, I shall learn in what situation he is, whether he is on bail, or a prisoner."

"My poor father!" replied Jenny, sighing; "he little thinks his daughter is so near him. Oh that I could fly into his arms!"

"A little patience, Miss Jenny, you will soon embrace your father. Rely upon my acting with the most entire devotion, but also with prudence and consideration."

This is why James Playfair, after having delivered the cargo of the "Dolphin" up to the General, and bargained for an immense stock of cotton, faithful to his promise, turned the conversation to the events of the day.

"So," said he, "you believe in the triumph of the slaveholders?"

"I do not for a moment doubt of our final success, and as

regards Charleston, Lee's army will soon relieve it; besides, what do you expect from the Abolitionists? admitting that which will never be, that the commercial towns of Virginia, the two Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, fall under their power, what then? Will they be masters of a country they can never occupy? No, certainly not; and for my part if they are ever victorious they shall pay dearly for it."

"And you are quite sure of your soldiers?" asked the Captain; "you are not afraid that Charleston will grow weary of a siege which is ruining her?"

"No, I do not fear treason; besides, the traitors would be punished remorselessly, and I would destroy the town itself by sword or fire if I discovered the least Unionist movement. Jefferson Davis confided Charleston to me and you may be sure that Charleston is in safe hands."

"Have you any Federal prisoners?" asked James Playfair, coming to the interesting object of the conversation.

"Yes, Captain," replied the General, "it was at Charleston that the first shot of separation was fired. The Abolitionists who were here attempted to resist, and after being defeated they have been kept as prisoners of war."

"And have you many?"

"About a hundred."

"Free in the town?"

"They were until I discovered a plot formed by them

their chief succeeded in establishing a communication with the besiegers, who were thus informed of the situation of affairs in the town. I was then obliged to lock up these dangerous guests, and several of them will only leave their prison to ascend the slope of the citadel, where ten confederate balls will reward them for their federalism."

"What! to be shot!" cried the young man, shuddering involuntarily.

"Yes, and their chief first of all. He is a very dangerous man to have in a besieged town. I have sent his letters to the President at Richmond, and before a week is passed his sentence will be irrevocably passed."

"Who is this man you speak of," asked James Playfair, with an assumed carelessness.

"A journalist from Boston, a violent Abolitionist with the confounded spirit of Lincoln."

"And his name?"

"Jonathan Halliburtt."

"Poor wretch!" exclaimed James, suppressing his emotion; "whatever he may have done one cannot help pitying him. And you think that he will be shot?"

"I am sure of it," replied Beauregard. "What can you expect? War is war, one must defend oneself as best one can."

"Well, it is nothing to me," said the Captain; "I shall be far enough away when this execution takes place."

"What! you are thinking of going away already."

"Yes, General, business must be attended to; as soon as my cargo of cotton is on board I shall be out to sea again. I was fortunate enough to enter the bay, but the difficulty is in getting out again. The 'Dolphin' is a good ship; she can beat any of the Federal vessels for speed, but she does not pretend to distance cannon-balls, and a shell in the hull or engine would seriously affect my enterprise."

"As you please, Captain," replied Beauregard; "I have no advice to give you under such circumstances. You are doing your business, and you are right. I should act in the same manner were I in your place; besides a stay at Charleston is not very pleasant, and a harbour where shells are falling three days out of four is not a safe shelter for your ship; so you will set sail when you please, but can you tell me what is the number and the force of the Federal vessels cruising before Charleston?"

James Playfair did his best to answer the General and took leave of him on the best of terms; then he returned to the "Dolphin" very thoughtful and very depressed from what he had just heard.

"What shall I say to Miss Jenny? ought I to tell her Mr. Halliburtt's terrible situation? or would it be better to keep her in ignorance of the trial which is awaiting her? Poor child!"

He had not gone fifty steps from the governor's house

when he ran against Crockston: the worthy American had been watching for him since his departure.

"Well, Captain?"

James Playfair looked steadily at Crockston, and the latter soon understood he had no favourable news to give him.

"Have you seen Beauregard?" he asked.

"Yes," replied James Playfair.

"And have you spoken to him about Mr. Halliburtt?"

"No! it was he who spoke to me about him."

"Well, Captain?"

"Well! I may as well tell you everything, Crockston."

"Everything, Captain."

"General Beauregard has told me that your master will be shot within a week."

At this news any one else but Crockston would have grown furious or given way to bursts of grief, but the American, who feared nothing, only said, with almost a smile on his lips,—

"Pooh! what does it matter?"

"How! what does it matter?" cried James Playfair; "I tell you that Mr. Halliburtt will be shot within a week, and you answer, what does it matter?"

"And I mean it—if in six days he is on board the 'Dolphin,' and if in seven days the 'Dolphin' is on the open

sea."

"Right!" exclaimed the Captain, pressing Crockston's hand. "I understand, my good fellow, you have got some pluck; and for myself, in spite of Uncle Vincent, I would throw myself overboard for Miss Jenny."

"No one need be thrown overboard," replied the American, "only the fish would gain by that: the most important business now is to deliver Mr. Halliburtt."

"But you must know that it will be difficult to do so."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Crockston.

"It is a question of communicating with a prisoner strictly guarded."

"Certainly."

"And to bring about an almost miraculous escape."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Crockston; "a prisoner thinks more of escaping than his guardian thinks of keeping him; that's why, thanks to our help, Mr. Halliburtt will be saved."

"You are right, Crockston."

"Always right."

"But now what will you do? there must be some plan and there are precautions to be taken."

"I will think about it."

"But when Miss Jenny learns that her father is condemned to death, and that the order for his execution may come any day—"

"She will know nothing about it, that is all."

"Yes, it will be better for her and for us to tell her nothing."

"Where is Mr. Halliburtt imprisoned?" asked Crockston.

"In the citadel," replied James Playfair.

"Just so!—On board now?"

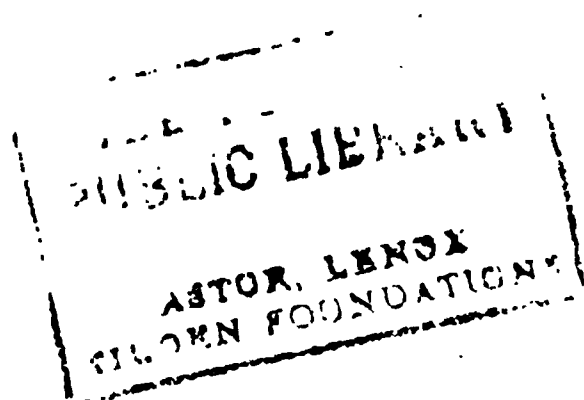
"On board, Crockston!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

MISS JENNY, sitting at the poop of the "Dolphin," was anxiously waiting the captain's return; when the latter went up to her she could not utter a word, but her eyes questioned James Playfair more eagerly than her lips could have done. The latter, with Crockston's help, informed the young girl of the facts relating to her father's imprisonment. He said that he had carefully broached the subject of the prisoners of war to Beauregard, but as the General did not seem disposed at all in their favour, he had thought it better to say no more about it, but think the matter over again.

"Since Mr. Halliburtt is not free in the town, his escape will be more difficult; but I will finish my task, and I promise you, Miss Jenny, that the 'Dolphin' shall not leave Charleston, without having your father on board."





"I PROMISE YOU, MISS JENNY."

"Thank you, Mr. James; I thank you with my whole heart."

At these words James Playfair felt a thrill of joy through his whole being.

He approached the young girl with moist eyes and quivering lips; perhaps he was going to make an avowal of the sentiments he could no longer repress, when Crockston interfered,—

"This is no time for grieving," said he; "we must go to work, and consider what to do."

"Have you any plan, Crockston?" asked the young girl.

"I always have a plan," replied the American: "it is my peculiarity."

"But a good one?" said James Playfair.

"Excellent! and all the ministers in Washington could not devise a better; it is almost as good as if Mr. Halliburtt was already on board."

Crockston spoke with such perfect assurance, at the same time with such simplicity, that it must have been the most incredulous person who could doubt his words.

"We are listening, Crockston," said James Playfair.

"Good! You, Captain, will go to General Beauregard, and ask a favour of him which he will not refuse you."

"And what is that?"

"You will tell him that you have on board a tiresome

subject, a scamp who has been very troublesome during the voyage, and excited the crew to revolt. You will give him permission to shut him up in the citadel; at the same time on the condition that he shall return to the ship on her departure, in order to be taken back to England to be delivered over to the justice of his country."

"Good!" said James Playfair, half smiling, "do all that, and Beauregard will grant my request willingly."

"I am perfectly sure of it," replied the American.

"But," resumed Playfair, "one thing is wanting."

"What is that?"

"The scamp."

"He is before you, Captain."

"What, the rebellious subject?"

"Is myself; don't trouble yourself about that."

"Oh! you brave, generous heart," cried Jenny, pressing the American's rough hands between her small palms.

"Go, Crockston," said James Playfair; "I understand you, my friend; and I only regret one thing, that I cannot take your place."

"Every one his part," replied Crockston; "if you were yourself in my place you would be very much embarrassed, which I shall not be; you will have enough to do to get out of the harbour under the fire of the

and Rebs, which, for my part, I should manage very badly."

"Well, Crockston, go on."

"Once in the citadel—I know it—I shall see what to do, and rest assured I shall do my best ; in the meanwhile, you will be getting your cargo on board."

"Oh ! business is now a very unimportant detail," said the Captain.

"Not at all ! and what would your uncle Vincent say to that ? We must join sentiment with work ; it will prevent suspicion ; but do it quickly. Can you be ready in six days ?"

"Yes."

"Well, let the 'Dolphin' be ready to start on the 22nd."

"She shall be ready."

"On the evening of the 22nd of January, you understand, send a gig with your best men to White Point, at the end of the town ; wait there till nine o'clock, and then you will see Mr. Halliburtt and your servant."

"But how will you manage to effect Mr. Halliburtt's deliverance, and also escape yourself ?"

"That's my look-out."

"Dear Crockston, you are going to risk your life then, to save my father !"

"Don't be uneasy, Miss Jenny, I shall risk absolute nothing, you may believe me."

"Well," asked James Playfair, "when must I have you locked up?"

"To-day—you understand—I demoralize your crew there is no time to be lost."

"Would you like any money? it may be of use to you in the citadel."

"Money to buy the gaoler! Oh, no! it would be a poor bargain; when one goes there the gaoler keeps the money and the prisoner! No! I have surer means than that; however, a few dollars may be useful; one must be able to drink, if needs be."

"And intoxicate the gaoler."

"No, an intoxicated gaoler would spoil everything. No, I tell you I have an idea, let me work it out."

"Here, my good fellow, are ten dollars."

"It is too much, but I will return what is over."

"Well, then, are you ready?"

"Quite ready to be a downright rogue."

"Let us go to work then."

"Crockston," said the young girl, in a faltering voice, "you are the best man on earth."

"I know it," replied the American, laughing good humouredly. "By-the-bye, Captain, an important item."

"What is that?"

"If the General proposes to hang your rebel—you know that military men like sharp work—"

"Well, Crockston?"

"Well, you will say that you must think about it."

"I promise you I will."

The same day to the great astonishment of the crew, who were not in the secret, Crockston with his feet and hands in irons was taken on shore by a dozen sailors, and half-an-hour after, by Captain James Playfair's request, he was led through the streets of the town, and in spite of his resistance was imprisoned in the citadel.

During this and the following days the unloading of the "Dolphin" was rapidly accomplished; the steam cranes lifted out the European cargo to make room for the native goods. The people of Charleston, who were present at this interesting work, helped the sailors, whom they held in great respect, but the Captain did not leave the brave fellows much time for receiving compliments; he was constantly behind them, and urged them on with feverish activity, the reason of which the sailors could not suspect.

Three days later, on the 18th of January, the first bales of cotton began to be packed in the hold: although James Playfair troubled himself no more about it, the firm Playfair and Co. were making an excellent bargain,

having obtained the cotton which encumbered the Charleston wharves at very far less than its value.

In the meantime no news had been heard of Crockston. Jenny without saying anything about it was a prey to incessant fears, her pale face spoke for her, and James Playfair endeavoured his utmost to ease her mind.

"I have all confidence in Crockston," said he, "he is a devoted servant, as you must know better than I do, Jenny. You must make yourself quite at ease; believe me in three days you will be folded in your father's arms."

"Ah! Mr. James," cried the young girl, "how can I repay you for such devotion? How shall we ever be able to thank you?"

"I will tell you when we are in English seas," replied the young Captain.

Jenny raised her tearful face to him for a moment, then her eyelids drooped, and she went back to her cabin.

James Playfair hoped that the young girl would know nothing of her father's terrible situation until he was in safety, but she was apprized of the truth by the involuntary indiscretion of a sailor.

The reply from the Richmond cabinet had arrived, and a courier who had been able to pass the line of outposts, the reply contained Jonathan Halliburt's death-warrant. The news of the approaching execution was not,

preaching through the town, and it was brought on board by one of the sailors of the "Dolphin;" the man told the Captain, without thinking that Miss Halliburtt was within hearing; the young girl uttered a piercing cry, and fell unconscious on the deck. James Playfair carried her to her cabin, but the most assiduous care was necessary to restore her to life.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw the young Captain, who, with a finger on his lips, enjoined absolute silence. With difficulty she repressed the outburst of grief, and James Playfair, leaning towards her, said softly,—

"Fenny, in two hours your father will be in safety with you, or I shall have perished in endeavouring to save him!"

When he left the cabin, saying to himself, "And now she must be carried off at any price, since I must pay for her liberty with my own life and those of my crew."

The hour for action had arrived, the loading of the ship's cargo had been finished since morning; in two hours the ship would be ready to start.

James Playfair had left the North Commercial Wharf and gone into the roadstead, so that he was ready to make use of the tide, which would be high at nine o'clock in the evening.

It was seven o'clock when James left the young girl,

and began to make preparations for departure. Until the present time the secret had been strictly kept between himself, Crockston, and Jenny; but now he thought wise to inform Mr. Mathew of the situation of affairs, and he did so immediately.

"Very well, sir," replied Mr. Mathew, without making the least remark, "and nine o'clock is the time?"

"Nine o'clock, and have the fires lit immediately, and the steam got up."

"It shall be done, Captain."

"The 'Dolphin' may remain at anchor; we will cut our moorings and sheer off, without losing a moment."

"Just so."

"Have a lantern placed at the mainmast-head; the night is dark, and will be foggy; we must not risk losing our way in returning; you had better have the bell starting rung at nine o'clock."

"Your orders shall be punctually attended to, Captain."

"And now, Mr. Mathew, have a shore-boat manned with six of our best men; I am going to set out directly for 'White Point.' I leave Miss Jenny in your charge, and may God protect us!"

"May God protect us!" repeated the first officer.

Then he immediately gave the necessary orders for the fires to be lighted, and the shore-boat provided with

few minutes the boat was ready, and James Playfair after bidding Jenny good-bye, stepped into it, whilst at the same time, he saw volumes of black smoke issuing from the chimneys of the ship, and losing itself in the fog. The darkness was profound; the wind had fallen, and in perfect silence the waters seemed to slumber in the immense harbour, whilst a few uncertain lights glimmered through the mist. James Playfair had taken his seat at the rudder, and with a steady hand he guided the boat towards White Point. It was a distance of about five miles; during the day James had taken his bearings accurately, so that he was able to make direct for Charles Point.

Eight o'clock struck from the church of St. Philip when the fore-boat ran aground at White Point.

There was an hour to wait before the exact time fixed for the landing at Rockston; the quay was deserted, with the exception of a sentinel pacing to and fro on the south and east sides. James Playfair grew impatient, and the minutes seemed hours to him.

Half-past eight he heard the sound of approaching boats; he left his men with their oars clear and ready to start, and went himself to see who it was; but he had not gone more than ten feet when he met a band of coast-guards, consisting of about twenty men. James drew his revolver from his pocket, deciding to make use of it, if needs be; but

what could he do against these soldiers on to the quay?

The leader came up to him, and asked,—

“Whose craft is that?”

“It is a gig belonging to the ‘De young man.

“And who are you?”

“Captain James Playfair.”

“I thought you had already started the Charleston channels.”

“I am ready to start. I ought even way, but—”

“But—” persisted the coast-guard.

A bright idea shot through James answered,—

“One of my sailors is locked up in the truth I had almost forgotten him; I of him in time, and I have sent my me

“Ah! that troublesome fellow; you back to England?”

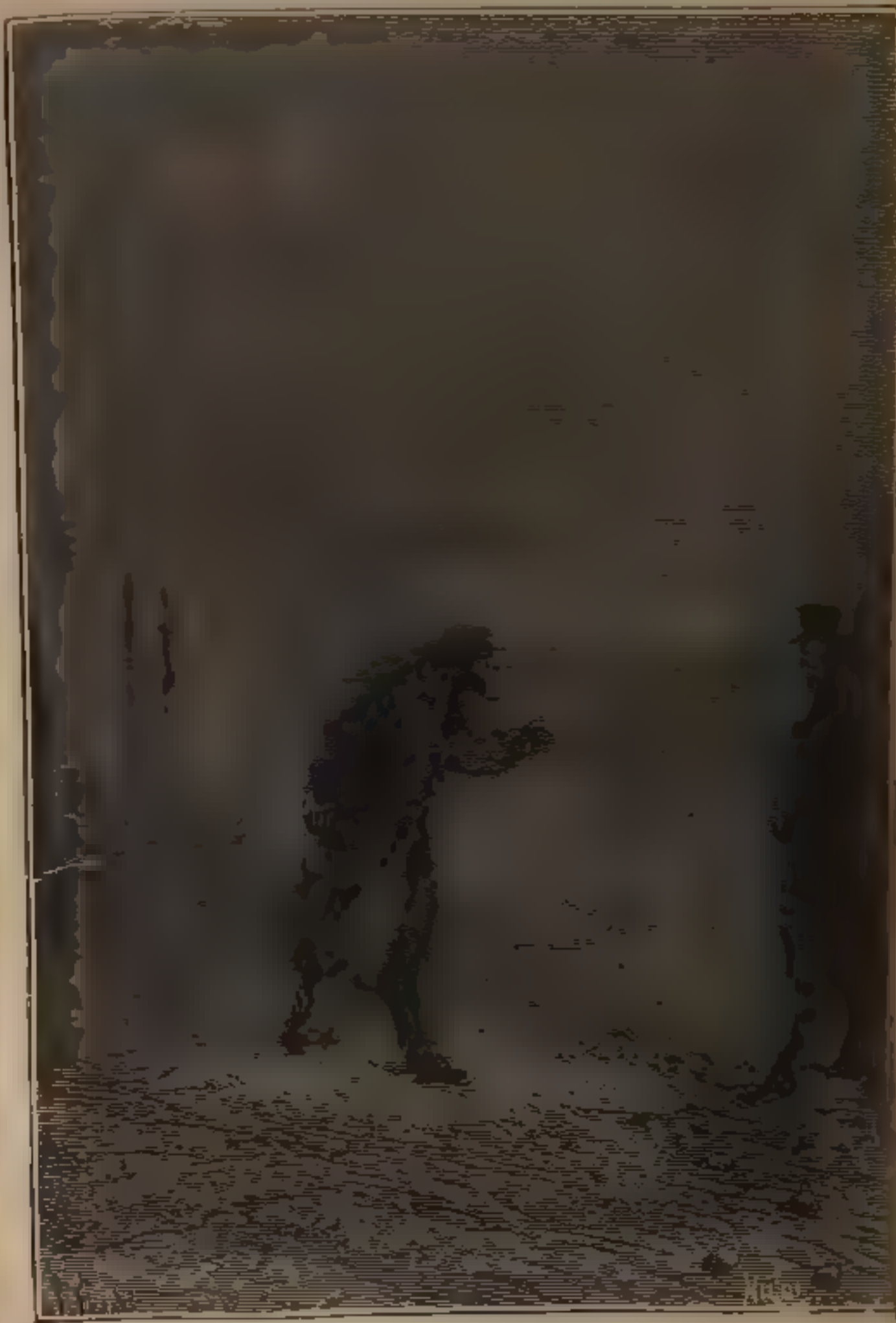
“Yes.”

“He might as well be hung here coast-guard, laughing at his joke.

“So I think,” said James Playfair, have the thing done in the regular way

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ASTOR LENDA



MR. HALLIBURTT.

"Not much chance of that, Captain, when you have to face the Morris Island batteries."

"Don't alarm yourself. I got in and I'll get out again."

"Prosperous voyage to you!"

"Thank you."

With this the men went off, and the shore was left silent.

At this moment nine o'clock struck; it was the appointed moment. James felt his heart beat violently; a whistle was heard; he replied to it, then he waited, listening, with his hand up to enjoin perfect silence on the sailors; a man appeared enveloped in a large cloak, and looking from one side to another, James ran up to him.

"Mr. Halliburtt?"

"I am he," replied the man with the cloak.

"God be praised!" cried James Playfair; "embark without losing a minute. Where is Crockston?"

"Crockston!" exclaimed Mr. Halliburtt, amazed. "What do you mean?"

"The man who has saved you and brought you here was your servant Crockston."

"The man who came with me was the gaoler from the Citadel," replied Mr. Halliburt.

"The gaoler!" cried James Playfair.

Evidently he knew nothing about it, and a thousand fears crowded in his mind.

"Quite right, the gaoler," cried a well-known voice; "the gaoler is sleeping like a top in my cell."

"Crockston! you! can it be you?" exclaimed Mr. Halliburtt.

"No time to talk now, master; we will explain everything to you afterwards; it is a question of life or death. Get in quick!"

The three men took their places in the boat.

"Push off!" cried the captain.

Immediately the six oars dipped into the water; the boat darted like a fish through the waters of Charleston Harbour.

CHAPTER IX.

"BETWEEN TWO FIRES."

THE boat, pulled by six robust oarsmen, flew over the water. The fog was growing dense, and it was with difficulty that James Playfair succeeded in keeping to the line of his bearings. Crockston sat at the bows, and Mr. Halliburtt at the stern next the Captain. The prisoner, now informed of the presence of his servant, wished to speak to him, but the latter enjoined silence.

However, a few minutes later, when they were in the middle of the harbour, Crockston determined to speak, knowing what thoughts were uppermost in Mr. Halliburtt's mind.

"Yes, my dear master," said he, "the gaoler is in my place in the cell, where I gave him two smart blows, one on the head and the other on the stomach, to act as a sleeping draught, and this when he was bringing me my supper; there is gratitude for you. I took his clothes and his keys,

found you, and let you out of the citadel, under the noses. That is all I have done."

"But my daughter?—" asked Mr. Halliburtt.

"Is on board the ship which is going to take England."

"My daughter there! there!" cried the An springing from his seat.

"Silence!" replied Crockston, "a few minutes, shall be saved."

The boat flew through the darkness, but James fair was obliged to steer rather by guess, as the of the "Dolphin" were no longer visible through t He was undecided what direction to follow, and th ness was so great that the rowers could not even see end of their oars.

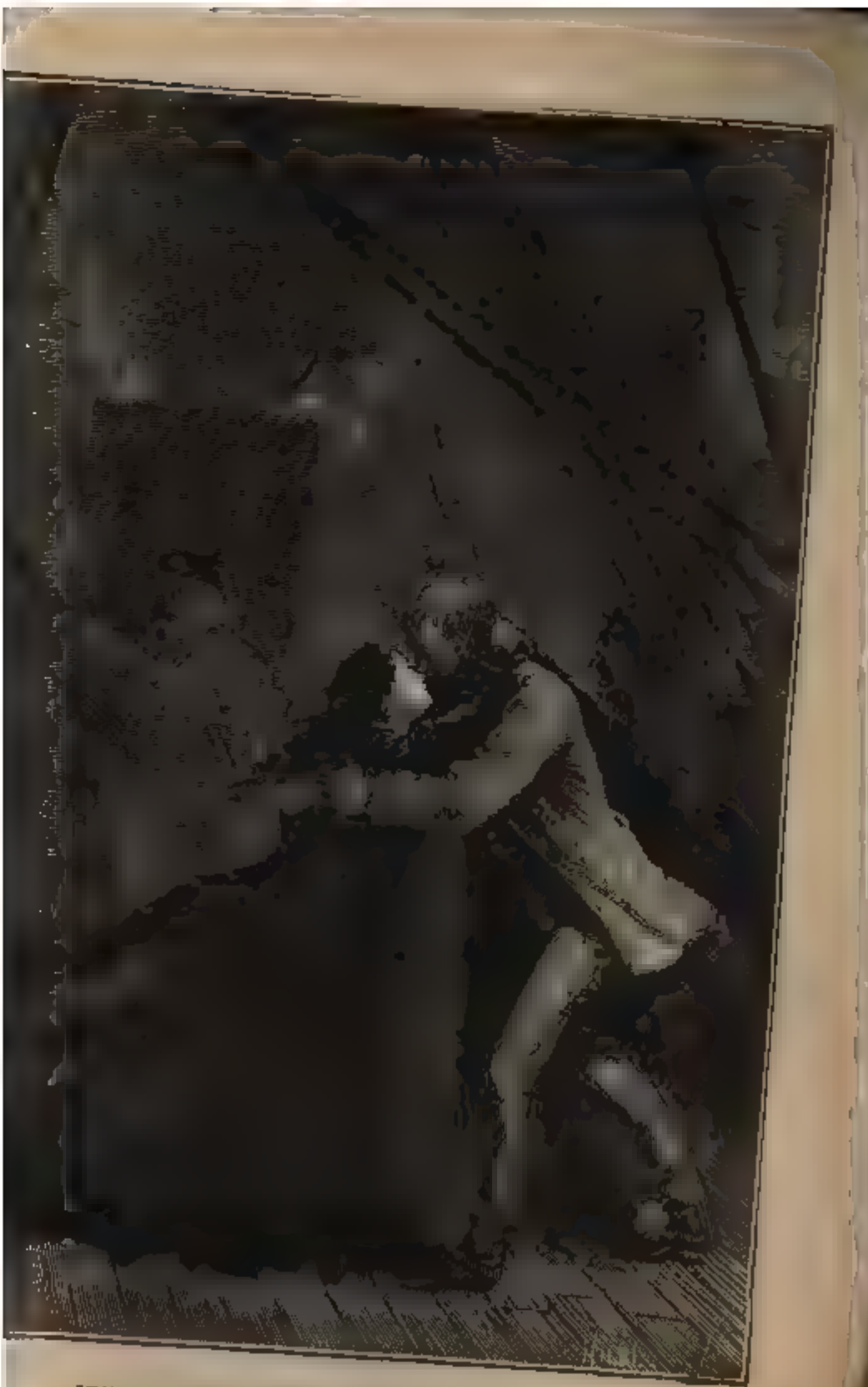
"Well, Mr. James?" said Crockston.

"We must have made more than a mile and replied the Captain. "You don't see anything, ston?"

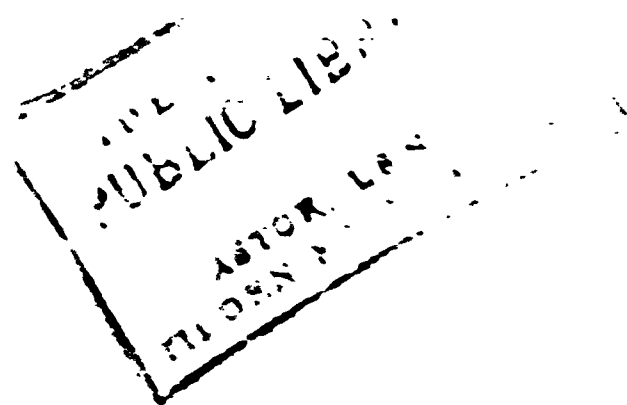
"Nothing; nevertheless I have good eyes, but w get there all right. They don't suspect anything there."

These words were hardly finished when the flash o gleamed for an instant through the darkness, and v in the mist.

"A signal!" cried James Playfair.



JENNY FELL INTO HER FATHER'S ARMS.



"Whew!" exclaimed Crockston, "it must have come from the citadel. Let us wait."

A second, then a third shot was fired in the direction of the first, and almost the same signal was repeated a mile in front of the gig.

"That is from Fort Sumter," cried Crockston, "and it is the signal of escape. Urge on the men; everything is discovered."

"Pull for your lives, my men!" cried James Playfair, urging on the sailors, "those gun-shots cleared my route. The Dolphin' is eight hundred yards ahead of us. Stop! I hear the bell on board. Hurrah, there it is again! Twenty pounds for you if we are back in five minutes!"

The boat skimmed over the waves under the sailors' powerful oars. A cannon boomed in the direction of the town. Crockston heard a ball whiz past them.

The bell on the "Dolphin" was ringing loudly. A few more strokes and the boat was alongside. A few more seconds and Jenny fell into her father's arms.

The gig was immediately raised, and James Playfair sprang on to the poop.

"Is the steam up, Mr. Mathew?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Have the moorings cut at once."

A few minutes later the two screws carried the steamer towards the principal channel, away from Fort Sumter.

"Mr. Mathew," said James, "we must not think of taking the Sullivan Island channel; we should run down under the Confederate guns. Let us go as near as possible to the right side of the harbour out of range of the Federal batteries. Have you a safe man at the helm?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Have the lanterns and the fires on deck extinguished; there is a great deal too much light, but we must not help the reflection from the engine-rooms."

During this conversation "the Dolphin" was going at great speed; but in altering her course to keep to the right side of the Charleston Harbour she was obliged to enter a narrow channel which took her for a moment near Fort Sumter, and when scarcely half a mile off all the guns bearing on her were discharged at the same time, and a shower of shot and shell passed in front of the "Dolphin" with a thundering report.

"Too soon, stupids," cried James Playfair, with a loud laugh. "Make haste, make haste, Mr. Engineer, or we shall get between two fires."

The stokers fed the furnaces, and the "Dolphin" trembled all over with the effort of the engine as if she was on the point of exploding.

At this moment a second report was heard, and another shower of balls whizzed behind the "Dolphin."

"Too late, stupids," cried the young Captain, with a regular roar.

Then Crockston, who was standing on the poop, cried, "That's one passed. A few minutes more, and we shall have done with the Rebs."

"Then do you think we have nothing more to fear from Fort Sumter?" asked James.

"Nothing at all, but everything from Fort Moultrie, at the end of Sullivan Island; but they will only get a chance at us for half a minute, and then they must choose their time well, and shoot straight if they want to reach us. We are getting near."

"Right; the position of Fort Moultrie will allow us to go straight for the principal channel. Fire away then, fire away!"

At the same moment, and as if in obedience to James Playfair, the fort was illuminated by a triple line of lightning. A frightful crash was heard; then a crackling sound on board the steamer.

"Touched this time!" exclaimed Crockston.

"Mr. Mathew!" cried the Captain to his second, who was stationed at the bows, "what has been damaged?"

"The bowsprit broken."

"Any wounded?"

"No, Captain."

"Well, then, the masts may go to Jericho. Straight

into the pass ! Straight ! and steer towards island."

"We have passed the Rebs!" cried Crocker
"and if we must have balls in our hull, I would
rather have the Northerners ; they are more
digested."

In fact, the "Dolphin" could not yet consider
out of danger ; for if Morris Island was not fortified
the formidable pieces of artillery which were placed
a few months later, nevertheless its guns and m
could easily have sunk a ship like the "Dolphin."

The alarm had been given to the Federals o
island, and to the blockading squadron, by the firing
Forts Sumter and Moultrie. The besiegers could
make out the reason of this night attack ; it did not
to be directed against them. However, they were o
to consider it so, and were ready to reply.

It occupied James Playfair's thoughts whilst m
towards the passes of Morris Island ; and he had n
to fear, for in a quarter of an hour's time lights gle
rapidly through the darkness. A shower of small
fell round the steamer, scattering the water ove
bulwarks ; some of them even struck the deck o
"Dolphin," but not on their points, which saved the shi
certain ruin. In fact, these shell, as it was afte
discovered, could break into a hundred fragments, a

cover a superficial area of a hundred and twenty square feet with Greek fire, which would burn for twenty minutes, and nothing could extinguish it. One of these shells alone could set a ship on fire. Fortunately for the "Dolphin," they were a new invention, and as yet far from perfect. Once thrown into the air, a false rotary movement kept them inclined, and, when falling, instead of striking on their points, where is the percussion apparatus, they fell flat. This defect in construction alone saved the "Dolphin." The falling of these shells did her little harm, and under the pressure of her over-heated boilers she continued to advance into the pass.

At this moment, and in spite of his orders, Mr. Halliburtt and his daughter went to James Playfair on the poop; the latter urged them to return to their cabins, but Jenny declared that she would remain by the Captain. As for Mr. Halliburtt, who had just learnt all the noble conduct of his deliverer, he pressed his hand without being able to utter a word.

The "Dolphin" was speeding rapidly towards the open sea. There were only three miles more before she would be in the waters of the Atlantic; if the pass was free at its entrance, she was saved. James Playfair was wonderfully well acquainted with all the secrets of Charleston Bay, and he guided his ship through the darkness with an unerring hand. He was beginning to think his daring

enterprise successful, when a sailor on the forecabin cried,—

"A ship!"

"A ship?" cried James.

"Yes, on the larboard side."

The fog had cleared off, and a large frigate was making towards the pass, in order to obstruct the passage of the "Dolphin." It was necessary, cost what it might, to distance her, and urge the steam-engine to an increased speed, or all was lost.

"Port the helm at once!" cried the captain.

Then he sprang on to the bridge above the engine. By his orders one of the screws was stopped, and under the action of the other the "Dolphin," veering with an extraordinary rapidity avoided running foul of the frigate, advanced like her to the entrance of the pass. It was a question of speed.

James Playfair understood that in this lay his own safety, Miss Jenny's, her father's, and that of all his crew.

The frigate was considerably in advance of the "Dolphin." It was evident from the volumes of black smoke issuing from her chimneys that she was getting up her steam. James Playfair was not the man to be left in the background.

"How are the engines?" cried he to the engineer.

"At the maximum speed," replied the latter; "the steam is escaping by all the valves."

"Fasten them down," ordered the Captain.

And his orders were executed at the risk of blowing up the ship.

The "Dolphin" again increased her speed; the pistons worked with frightful rapidity; the metal plates on which the engine was placed trembled under the terrific force of their blows. It was a sight to make the boldest shudder.

"More pressure!" cried James Playfair; "put on more pressure!"

"Impossible!" replied the engineer; "the valves are tightly closed; our furnaces are full up to the mouths."

"What difference! Fill them with cotton soaked in spirits; we must pass that frigate at any price."

At these words the most daring of the sailors looked at each other, but did not hesitate. Some bales of cotton were thrown into the engine-room, a barrel of spirits broached over them, and this expensive fuel placed, not without danger, in the red-hot furnaces. The stokers could no longer hear each other speak for the roaring of the flames. Soon the metal plates of the furnaces became red-hot; the pistons worked like the pistons of a locomotive; the steam-gauge showed a frightful tension; the steamer flew over the water; her boards creaked, and her chimneys threw out

volumes of smoke mingled with flames. She was at a headlong speed, but, nevertheless, she was gaining the frigate—passed her, distanced her, and in ten minutes was out of the channel.

“Saved!” cried the Captain.

“Saved!” echoed the crew, clapping their hands.

Already the Charleston beacon was disappearing to the south-west; the sound of firing from the batteries was fainter, and it might with reason be thought that the danger was all past, when a shell from a gun-boat at large was hurled whizzing through the air. It was impossible to trace its course, thanks to the line of fire which it followed.

Then was a moment of anxiety impossible to describe; every one was silent, and each watched fearfully the progress of the projectile. Nothing could be done to escape it, and in a few seconds it fell with a frightful crash on the fore-deck of the “Dolphin.”

The terrified sailors crowded to the stern, and dared not move a step, whilst the shell was burning with a brisk crackle.

But one brave man alone among them ran up to the formidable weapon of destruction. It was Crockett who took the shell in his strong arms, whilst showers of sparks were falling from it; then, with a superhuman effort, he threw it overboard.

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Hardly had the shell reached the surface of the water when it burst with a frightful report.

“Hurrah! hurrah!” cried the whole crew of the “Dolphin” unanimously, whilst Crockston rubbed his hands.

Some time later the steamer sped rapidly through the waters of the Atlantic; the American coast disappeared in the darkness, and the distant lights which shot across the horizon indicated that the attack was general between the batteries of Morris Island and the forts of Charleston Harbour.

CHAPTER X.

ST. MUNGO.

THE next day at sunrise the American coast had appeared ; not a ship was visible on the horizon, and the "Dolphin," moderating the frightful rapidity of her course, made quietly towards the Bermudas.

It is useless to recount the passage across the Atlantic, which was marked by no accidents, and ten days after her departure from Queenstown the French coast was before her.

What passed between the Captain and the young man may be imagined, even by the least observant individual. How could Mr. Halliburtt acknowledge the devotedness and courage of his deliverer, if it was not by making him the happiest of men ? James Playfair did not wait for the return of the seas to declare to the father and daughter the sentiments which overflowed his heart, and, if Crockston is to be believed, Miss Jenny received his confession with a grace and openness which she did not try to conceal.

Thus it happened that on the 14th of February, 18—, a numerous crowd was collected in the dim aisles of St. Angelo, the old cathedral of Glasgow. There were seamen, merchants, manufacturers, magistrates, and some of every denomination, gathered here. There was Miss Jenny in bridal array, and beside her the worthy Crockston, resplendent in apple-green clothes, with gold buttons, whilst Uncle Vincent stood proudly by his nephew.

In short, they were celebrating the marriage of James Playfair, of the firm of Vincent Playfair and Co., of Glasgow, with Miss Jenny Halliburtt, of Boston.

The ceremony was accomplished amidst great pomp. Every one knew the history of the "Dolphin," and every one thought the young Captain well recompensed for his devotion. He alone said that his reward was greater than he deserved.

In the evening there was a grand ball and banquet at Uncle Vincent's house, with a large distribution of shillings to the crowd collected in Gordon Street. Crockston did ample justice to this memorable feast, while keeping himself perfectly within bounds.

Every one was happy at this wedding; some at their own happiness, and others at the happiness around them, which is not always the case at ceremonies of this kind.

Late in the evening, when the guests had retired, James Playfair took his uncle's hand.

"Well, Uncle Vincent," said he to him.

"Well, Nephew James?"

"Are you pleased with the charming cargo you on board the 'Dolphin'?" continued Capt showing him his brave young wife.

"I am quite satisfied," replied the worthy.
"I have sold my cotton at three hundred and per cent. profit."

THE END.



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